

# GUHYAGARBHA TANTRA: INTRODUCTION

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## Introduction

### 1. The Nyingma School and the Three Inner Classes of Tantra

The all-embracing maṇḍala of the hundred peaceful and wrathful deities which is revered as the highest expression of the Mahāyoga class of Unsurpassed Yogatantra within the eighth century Indo-Tibetan tantra tradition was first brought to the attention of the western world through popular translations of the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* (Bar do thos grol chen mo), a section of Karma Lingpa's revelation: *Peaceful and Wrathful Deities: A Profound Secret Teaching [entitled] Natural Liberation through [Recognition of] Enlightened Intention* (Zab chos zhi khro dgongs pa rang grol). Through the pioneering translations and commentaries of Kazi Dawa Samdup, Evans Wentz and C. G. Jung, the imagery of this classic text has acquired far-reaching recognition on account of its importance for the Tibetan Buddhist understanding of death and the rebirth processes. Little is known, however, of the tantra-text on which this maṇḍala and its various gter ma revelations, including that of Karma Lingpa, are based.

The Guhyagarbha Tantra which is the primary source describing this maṇḍala is a highly influential text within the Nyingma tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, otherwise known as the "translation school of the ancients" (snga' 'gyur rnying ma). It is this tradition which has maintained the teaching-cycles and texts introduced to Tibet during the royal dynastic period of the eighth and ninth centuries, through to the epoch of the Indian scholar Smötijñānakīrti and prior to that of Lochen Rinchen Zangpo (958-1055). The Nyingmapa are those who have adhered to this "earlier dissemination" (snga' dar) and cultivated its traditions over succeeding centuries through study, meditation, composition, and the revelation of concealed texts or treasures (gter ma). A comprehensive account of the philosophical perspective and historical transmission of this school can be found in Dudjom Rinpoche's modern compilation, *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism: Its Fundamentals and History*. By contrast, the adherents of the later Buddhist lineages such as the Kadampa, Sakyapa and

Kagyupa which evolved in Tibet during the "subsequent dissemination" (phyi dar) of the teachings by Atiśa, Drokmi Lotsāwa, Marpa Lotsāwa and their contemporaries are generally known as Sarmapa, "followers of the new schools".

Although the designations "Nyingma" and "Sarma" were undoubtedly applied retrospectively, it is clear that by the eleventh century the two periods of Buddhist expansion in Tibet had become sufficiently distinguishable, enabling Rongzom Paṇḍita to attribute six superiorities to the ancient translations in his Precious Jewel Commentary (dKon mchog 'grel). In his view, the ancient translations of the Nyingma tradition are distinguished by the greatness of their royal benefactors, by the sanctity of the early Buddhist shrines, temples, and monasteries in which they were prepared, by the calibre of their translators, and the enlightened attributes of their supervising paṇḍitas, as well as by the lavish offerings made at the time when they were commissioned. Lastly, the Indic sources on which the ancient translations are based are said to have been propagated and transmitted through pure unadulterated lineages during the period when Buddhism reached its zenith in India, before the devastation caused by the Islamic incursions and Hindu resurgence.

As far as the technique of the ancient translations is concerned, Rongzompa makes the following additional remark:

Concerning the translations themselves: Since the translators of the past were emanations, they established the meanings correctly. For this reason their works are easy to understand and, on plumbing their depths, the blessing is great. But the translators of the later period were unable to render the meaning and made lexical translations following [merely] the arrangement of the Sanskrit texts. Consequently, their forced terminology is hard to understand, and on plumbing the depths the blessing is slight. Therefore, they are dissimilar.

Certain linguistic distinctions between the so-called semantic and lexical translation methodologies will be considered below in the context of the debate surrounding the origins of the Guhyagarbha Tantra. Generally speaking, the simple versification of texts like the Guhyagarbha stands in

marked contrast, for example, to that of the Kālacakra Tantra, which is considered by many to epitomise the most complex of the later translations.

Despite Rongzompa's entrenched position which was designed purposefully to counter the prejudice expressed against the ancient tantras by certain advocates of the new translation system, the Nyingma tradition for the most part remained aloof from the subsequent sectarian rivalries of Tibetan political life— whether in the conflict between Sakya and Drigung or in the civil war between the Karmapa backed Tsangpa administration and the Gelugpa hierarchy. Their philosophy and spirituality have however continued to exert influence on the later traditions until recent times. Important figures such as Karmapa Rangjung Dorje (1284-1339), Yungton Dorjepel (1284-1365), the Fifth Dalai Lama (1617-1682), Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo (1820-1892) and Jamgon Kongtrul (1813-1899) have contributed immensely to the evolution of the Nyingma teachings, notwithstanding their affiliation to other schools. As a study of the chos 'byung genre of Tibetan Buddhist historiography reveals, Tibet's great thinkers, scholars and meditators from all traditions could freely teach each other without sectarian inhibitions.

It is in the Nyingma system that the Buddhist teachings are classified according to a hierarchical gradation of nine vehicles or nine sequences of the vehicle (theg pa rim pa dgu), extending from the most exoteric sūtras to the most esoteric tantras. S.G. Karmay in his "Origin and Early Development of the Tibetan Religious Traditions of the Great Perfection" has traced the development of this ninefold classification through a comparative study of the writings of Padmasambhava, Kawa Peltsek, Nubchen Sangye Yeshe, Longchen Rabjampa and others. The synthesis outlined in the Anuyoga text *sPyi mdo dgongs pa 'dus pa* and elaborated by the Mindroling tradition refers to the first three sequences (śrāvakayāna, Pratyekabuddhayāna and Bodhisattvayāna) under the heading "vehicles which control the cause of suffering" (kun 'byung 'dran pa'i theg pa), to the middle three (Kriyātantra, Ubhayatantra and Yogatantra) as "vehicles of the outer tantras of austere awareness" (phyi dka' thub rig pa'i rgyud kyi theg pa), and to the last three (Mahāyoga, Anuyoga and Atiyoga) as "vehicles of overpowering means" (dbang bsgyur thabs kyi theg pa). According to Lochen Dharmaśrī, the enumeration of nine is itself provisional because the structure may be simplified, e.g. into the twofold

classification of Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna, or extended, e.g. by adding the mundane Manuḥyayāna or Devayāna. Indeed, in the final analysis, there may be as many vehicles as there are thoughts in the mind, while, from the resultant or absolute standpoint, there is said to be no vehicle at all. The following verses from the *Laṭkāvatārasūtra* (T. 107) are quoted in support of this position:

As long as there are perceptions,  
The culmination of the vehicles will never be reached.  
When the mind becomes transformed  
There is neither vehicle nor mover.

The integrated structure of these nine provisional vehicles is also mentioned in key texts, such as the principle Mental Class (sems sde) tantra of the Great Perfection (rdzogs pa chen po) system, the All-Accomplishing King (Kun byed rgyal po'i rgyud, T. 828):

Existentially there is only one,  
But empirically there are nine vehicles.

The distinctions between them are discussed in the many philosophical treatises of the Nyingma school which focus on spiritual and philosophical systems (siddhānta, Tib. grub mtha'), and notably in Longchen Rabjampa's Treasury of Philosophical Systems (Grub mtha' mdzod), Lochen Dharmaśrī's Oral Transmission of the Lord of Secrets (gSang bdag zhal lung), and Dudjom Rinpoche's Fundamentals of the Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism (bsTan pa'i rnam gzhag). All these sources make the most basic distinction between the first three or sūtra-based vehicles which advocate a graduated, causal approach to enlightenment (byang chub) or buddhahood (sangs rgyas nyid) and the last six or tantra-based vehicles which maintain the resultant view that buddhahood is primordially or atemporally (ye nas) attained, and realised as such by the removal of the obscurations covering enlightened mind (byang chub sems).

The term "tantra" (rgyud) actually means "continuum", referring to the threefold continuum of the ground (gzhi'i rgyud), continuum of the path (lam gyi rgyud) and continuum of the result ('bras bu'i rgyud), which respectively demarcate the unrealised abiding nature of reality (gnas lugs),

the means by which it is realised (thabs), and the fruitional buddha-body (sku) and pristine cognition (ye shes) resulting from that realisation. It is this structure of ground, path and result around which the tantra-texts, both Nyingma and Sarma are developed, as we will see below with reference to the Guhyagarbha Tantra. At the same time, the term tantra also refers to the four classes of texts which assume this threefold structure. The four classes are the texts of Kriyātantra, Ubhayatantra (or Caryātantra), Yogatantra and Yoganiruttaratantra, which are differentiated and discussed at length in the above treatises. The last of these subdivisions, according to the Nyingma school, comprises the texts of Mahāyoga, Anuyoga and Atiyoga, the "vehicles of overpowering means" or three classes of inner tantras (nang rgyud sde gsum), which form the principal subject matter of the Nyingmapa commentarial tradition. It is important that the distinctions between these three are now comprehended because, as we shall see, the Guhyagarbha Tantra has been interpreted from divergent Mahāyoga and Atiyoga perspectives.

When the three classes of inner tantras are contrasted, Mahāyoga is said to emphasise the ground or basis of the realisation of buddhahood, i.e. the abiding nature of reality (gnas lugs), Anuyoga the path or skilful means which bring about realisation and Atiyoga the result itself, the full-fledged presence of buddha-body (sku) and pristine cognition (ye shes). Alternatively, from the standpoint of meditative stability (samādhi), Mahāyoga focuses on the generation stage of meditation (bskyed rim), Anuyoga on the perfection stage (rdzogs rim), and Atiyoga on the Great Perfection (rdzogs chen).

In the words of Menyak Khyungdrak, an eleventh-century holder of the Nyingma lineage:

Though the three aspects of generation and perfection are present in them all, Mahāyoga emphatically teaches the generation stage [of meditation], Anuyoga emphatically teaches the perfection stage [of meditation], and the Great Perfection is effortless with respect to both stages.

Longchen Rabjampa, in his *Mind at Rest* (Sems nyid ngal gso), adds:

Mahāyoga emphasises [control of] vital energy and the skilful means of the generation stage.

Anuyoga emphasises [control of] seminal energy and the discriminative awareness of the perfection stage.

Atiyoga emphasises the pristine cognition in which everything is without duality.

And according to Kyoton śāk-ye of Gongbu:

Mahāyoga stresses conduct,

Anuyoga stresses meditative stability,

And Atiyoga stresses the view.

As these authors state, Mahāyoga emphasises the ground in its perspective, the generation stage in its meditative technique and ritual activities in its conduct, Anuyoga emphasises the path, the perfection stage of meditative technique and meditative stability, and Atiyoga emphasises the result, the Great Perfection or the view itself. We shall observe however that tantra-texts such as the Guhyagarbha, despite their classification within Mahāyoga, necessarily contain elements of all three, and it is for this reason that divergent exegetical traditions later developed.

The dispositions of those who would aspire to the three inner classes of tantra are also mentioned in the Tantra of the Great Array (bKod pa chen po), which says:

For one who would transcend the [mundane] mind

There is the generation phase.

For one who would possess the essence of mind

There is the perfection phase.

And for those who are supreme and most secret

There is the Great Perfection.

Longchen Rabjampa in his Great Chariot (Shing rta chen mo) elaborates:

The father tantras of Mahāyoga are the natural expression of the skilful means of appearance, intended on behalf of those requiring training who are mostly hostile and possessed by many ideas; the mother tantras of Anuyoga are the discriminative awareness of the perfection stage which is the reality of emptiness, intended for the benefit of those who are mostly desirous and delight in the tranquility of the mind; and the non-dual tantras of Atiyoga are revealed as the natural expression of their non-duality, intended for the benefit of those who are mostly deluded, but who are energetic.

When these three classes are considered distinctly, each is analysed according to its essence, etymology and classification, as in the following account derived from Lochen Dharmaśrī's *Oral Transmission of the Lord of Secrets* (*gSang bdag zhal lung*), which represents the opinion of the "distant lineage of the transmitted precepts" (*ring brgyud bka' ma*).

## MAHĀYOGA

The essence of Mahāyoga practice is that liberation is obtained through union with the indivisible superior truth (*lhag pa'i gnyis med bden pa*) by relying emphatically on the generation stage of meditation in which skilful means is employed (*thabs kyi bskyed rim*). The Sanskrit term mahāyoga is defined as the "great union" of the mind with non-dual truth. The classification includes the topics of empowerment (*dbang bskur*) and entrance (*'jug pa*), view (*lta ba*), discipline (*tshul khrims*), meditation (*sgom*), conduct (*spyod pa*) and result (*'bras bu*).

At the outset, four empowerments are conferred, enabling Mahāyoga to be practised. The vehicle is then entered through three successive phases of meditative stability, namely: great emptiness (*stong pa chen po*) which purifies death, great compassion (*snying rje chen po*) which purifies the intermediate state after death (*bar do*) and the seals and attainment of the maṇḍala-clusters (*phyag rgya dang tshom bu tshogs sgrub*) which purify the three phases of life by establishing the practitioner's true nature to be the maṇḍala of deities.

The view maintained by Mahāyoga practitioners holds ultimate truth (*don dam bden pa*) to be spontaneous awareness (*rig pa*) without conceptual elaboration, relative truth (*kun rdzob bden pa*) to be the ideas or mental energy of that awareness which manifest as a maṇḍala of buddha-body and pristine cognition, and the superior indivisible truth to be the unity of these two— emptiness and pure appearance.

Discipline in the context of Mahāyoga refers to twenty-eight commitments (*dam tshig*) that are upheld in relation to meditative practice, renunciation and attainment. Meditation here comprises both non-symbolic meditative stability in the nature of ultimate reality and the symbolic meditations of

the generation and perfection stages. In the generation stage, the maṇḍala of meditational deities is gradually visualised through the aforementioned three successive meditative stabilities, in which deity and thought processes are indivisible. In the perfection stage, the visualisation emphasises the control of the energy channels, currents of vital energy and focal points of seminal energy (rtsa rlung thig le), either within the meditator's own subtle body (rang lus steng sgo) or else when in union with a yogic partner (gzhan lus 'og sgo).

The conduct observed by practitioners of Mahāyoga implies that the defilements and dissonant mental states of cyclic existence (saṃsāra), as well as the rites of forceful "liberation" (sgrol) and sexual practices (sbyor) can be engaged without attachment because they are retained as skilful means. Lastly, the result attained by practitioners of Mahāyoga is the actualisation of the five buddha-bodies (sku lnga) in this very lifetime or in the intermediate state after death.

## ANUYOGA

The essence of Anuyoga practice is that by relying on the perfection stage of meditation, emphasising discriminative awareness (shes rab rdzogs rim), liberation is obtained through the unifying realisation of the expanse of reality (dbyings) and pristine cognition (ye shes), without duality. The Sanskrit term anuyoga is defined as "subsequent yoga", i.e., that which links Mahāyoga to Atiyoga or which reveals the path of desire (chags lam) subsequent on the experience of discriminative awareness.

As to the aforementioned six classificatory topics, Anuyoga has thirty-six basic and eight hundred and thirty-one ancillary empowerments which are conferred in relation to all nine sequences of the vehicle, including the sūtras; and it is entered through the spontaneously perfect non-duality of the expanse and pristine cognition.

The view maintained by Anuyoga practitioners is that all phenomena are the primordial maṇḍala of Samantabhadrī (ye ji bzhin pa'i dkyil 'khor), the uncreated awareness is the pristine cognition or spontaneously present maṇḍala of Samantabhadra (rang bzhin lhun grub kyi dkyil 'khor), and the supreme bliss of their offspring is the fundamental maṇḍala of enlightened

mind, without duality of expanse and pristine cognition (byang chub sems kyi dkyil 'khor).

Discipline in the context of Anuyoga refers to the nine categories of commitments described in the sixty-sixth chapter of the *Sūtra which Gathers All Intentions* (*mDo dgongs pa 'dus pa*, Derge Vol. 7). Meditation here comprises the path of means (*thabs lam*) which utilises the energy channels, currents of vital energy and focal points of seminal energy either with reference to the meditator's subtle body or in union with a yogic partner, and the path of liberation (*grol lam*) which comprises the non-conceptual meditative stability in the nature of reality and symbolic meditative stability in the nature of the meditational deities, who are said, here, to appear instantly "in the manner of a fish leaping from the water."

The conduct observed by practitioners of Anuyoga implies that all things are regarded with an attitude of sameness, and that acts of consecration, blessing and skilful means can be effectively performed. Lastly, the result attained by practitioners of Anuyoga is the actualisation of the twenty-five resultant realities ('bras bu chos nyer lnga) of the buddha-level within one lifetime.

## ATIYOGA

The essence of Atiyoga practice, also known as the Great Perfection (*rdzogs pa chen po*), is that liberation occurs in primordial buddhahood (*ye nas sangs rgyas pa*), without renunciation, acceptance, hope or doubt. The Sanskrit term *atiyoga* is defined as the "highest union" because it is the culmination of all vehicles, and of both the generation and perfection stages.

As to the aforementioned six-fold classification: the empowerment of the expressive power of awareness (*rig pa'i rtsal dbang*) is initially conferred, and the vehicle is then entered, without engaging in mundane activities.

The view maintained by Atiyoga practitioners is that all things of cyclic existence (*saṃsāra*) and *nirvāṇa* are present as primordial buddhahood within the unique point of seminal energy (*thig le nyag gcig*) , identified with the buddha-body of reality (*chos sku*).

Discipline in the context of Atiyoga includes the observance of commitments known as nothingness or ineffability (*med pa*), openness (*phyal ba*), uniqueness or oneness (*gcig pa*), and spontaneous presence (*lhun grub*). Meditation here comprises the three classes of the Great Perfection— Mental, Spatial and Esoteric Instructional (*sems klong man ngag gi sde gsum*)— the last of which includes the most advanced techniques of Cutting Through Resistance (*khregs chod*) and All-Surpassing Realisation (*thod rgal*).

The conduct observed by practitioners of Atiyoga is devoid of acceptance or rejection. Lastly, the result attained by practitioners of Atiyoga is that the goal (buddhahood) is reached at the present moment, on the level of spontaneously perfect Samantabhadra.

Taking all these points into account, the prime distinction between the three inner classes of tantra is therefore that Mahāyoga, the basis, cultivates the realisation of primordial buddhahood in a gradual manner, Anuyoga does so in a spontaneous or perfect manner, and Atiyoga is the Great Perfection underlying both approaches— the goal itself.

## 2. COMPILATION OF THE TANTRA TEXTS OF THE NYINGMA SCHOOL

According to the Nyingma tradition, some four hundred texts representative of these three inner classes of tantra were translated from Sanskrit and other languages, into Tibetan during the eighth and early ninth centuries, under the royal patronage of King Trisong Detsen and his successors. This great literary achievement was brought about at Drajurling in Samye through the combined efforts of invited foreign scholars (*paṇḍita*) and indigenous Tibetan translators (*lo tsā ba*), of whom the names of over sixty are recorded in the extant colophons of the texts they translated. The texts were not publicly taught but applied in practice with great secrecy, in accordance with the ancient Indian tradition, by the first generation Tibetan students of Padmasambhava, Vimalamitra, and other great accomplished masters in the remote meditation hermitages at Chimphu, Dra Yangdzong, Chuwori, Yerpa and Sheldrak. Many of the neophytes, including Nyak Jñānakumāra, are consequently said to have

manifested the supreme and common spiritual accomplishments (siddhi), and to have established their own teaching lineages. For this reason, the esoteric higher classes of tantra were excluded from the lDan dkar ma catalogue of translations, which was compiled during the early ninth century by two foremost students of Padmasambhava, as a list of all the exoteric texts (sūtras, vinaya and so on) that had been translated for wider propagation. Then, when concerted efforts were made in the early ninth century to standardise the terminology and orthography of the early exoteric translations, the more esoteric texts representing the three classes of tantra were left unaltered on account of their secrecy and great sanctity. This is recounted in the *sGra sbyor bam gnyis*, an important ninth century manual on the transliteration and translation of Sanskrit terms, which in fact says:

Because of their great strictness the inner tantras of the secret mantras are not here set forth.

During the persecution of King Langdarma (r. 841-846) which followed, the institutions of monastic Buddhism were dismantled in the Tibetan heartlands, but the esoteric practices of the inner tantras were secretly maintained by Nubchen Sangye Yeshe and his contemporaries in the vicinity of Lake Yamdrok. The subsequent assassination of Langdarma weakened the royal dynasty, and the country soon disintegrated in the wake of three catastrophic rebellions. Later, in the eleventh century, when the new wave of translations was introduced to Tibet by the likes of Rinchen Zangpo, Drokmi Lotsāwa, and Marpa Lotsāwa, polemical edicts were written against the practice of the early tantras by Lha Lama Yeshe-o (947-1024) the king of Gu-ge in far-west Tibet, who was a fifth generation descendent of Langdarma, and by Go Khugpa Lhe-tse. It is largely for this reason that these texts were not eventually included in the Tibetan Tripiāaka (Kangyur), which is essentially a 14th century compilation of the later translations. Even so, the Kangyur does include a short selection of early tantras in its rNying rGyud section (T. 828-844), which may have, as Ngagi Wangpo claims, been inserted during the 14th century by Upa Losal Sangye Bum. These comprise only the principal texts representing each of the three classes, namely— the *Tantra of the All-Accomplishing King* (Kun byed rgyal po, T. 828) which exemplifies the Mental Class (sems sde) of Atiyoga, the *Sūtra Which Gathers All Intentions* (mDo dgongs-pa 'dus pa, T.

829) and its root the *All-Gathering Awareness* (Kun 'dus rig pa, T. 831) along with the *Flash of Splendour* (Ye shes rngam glog, T. 830) which represent Anuyoga, and a series of tantras belonging to the Mahāyoga class, viz. T. 832-844, which will be discussed below (see pp. 00-00).

For such reasons, the complete Collected Tantras of the Ancient Tradition (rnying ma'i rgyud 'bum) came to be compiled independently of the Tibetan Tripitaka. It was through the determined efforts of the Zur family that the bulk of the early tantras, later to be excluded from the Kangyur, were stored at Ugpalung in Tsang, which was the main centre of Nyingma activity in the Tibetan heartlands from the era of Zurpoche śākya Jungne (late tenth/ early eleventh century) until the fourteenth century. Zurpoche gathered these early tantras from all possible sources, including some in the possession of his contemporary Rok śākya Jungne, who imparted them through their mutual student Zangom Sherab Gyalpo. Zurpoche then introduced the systematic study and practice of the tantras at his college and hermitage in Ugpalung, while his successors Zurchung Sherab Drak (1014-74) and Zur śākya Senge (1074-1135) widely disseminated the teaching of the early tantras from their nearby hermitages at Drak Gyawo and Drophuk respectively.

Slightly later, in 1192 or 1206, Drogon Namka Pelwa, the son of the illustrious treasure-finder Nyangrel Nyima Ozer, commissioned a new manuscript edition of the early tantras, inscribed in gold (rgyud 'bum gser bris ma), probably based on the Ugpalung collection, at his ancestral residence of Mawachok in Southern Tibet. This was undertaken as an act of devotion, coinciding with the death of his father.

Then, in the early 14th century, a descendent of the Zur family named Zur Zangpopel utilised the material resources, which he had obtained in the form of commissions and gifts from the Mongol emperor Buyantu (r. 1311-1320), to prepare printing-blocks for twenty-eight texts of the early tantras and their commentaries, which were preserved at Ugpalung, including the Guhyagarbha Tantra (T. 832), and its celebrated Indian commentary by Vilāsavjara, the so-called *sPar khab Commentary* (Guhyagarbhamahātantra-rājaāikā, P. 4718). He is said to have printed a thousand copies of each and distributed them to students. This account cannot be corroborated because the xylographs and their copies are no longer extant, but, if true, the project

would certainly rank among the earliest Tibetan attempts to introduce woodblock printing. It is possible, as Bryan J. Cuevas has noted, that the manuscript version of the Collected Tantras that was formerly preserved at Thandrok Monastery in Kongpo was brought there around this time, because the third generation lineage-holder of Karma Lingpa, one Gyarawa Namkha Chokyi Gyatso (b. 1430) received the transmission there.

At any rate, the dissemination of the early tantra texts remained somewhat tenuous until the fifteenth century, when the treasure-finder Ratna Lingpa (1403-1471) made great efforts to gather source materials from all quarters, including the provisional set of the Collected Tantras which was preserved at Ugpalung, and he received their complete transmission from the aged Megom Samten Zangpo of Tsang, who alone held their continuous lineage at that time. Later, Ratna Lingpa integrated these texts with certain other tantras in his possession, including some that had been revealed as *gter ma* in the preceeding centuries, and he compiled two new manuscript editions of the Collected Tantras in 40 short-length volumes, at Lhundrub Palace, his residence in Drushul, the earlier one inscribed in black ink, and the later one in gold. He transmitted the collection many times to ensure their continuity through the succession of his own familial line and that of the treasure finder Pema Lingpa (1450-1521), which are both intimately connected with the Lhodrak border region and neighbouring Bhutan. In this way, the lineage was transmitted from Ratna Lingpa through: Tshewang Drakpa (his elder son); Ngawang Drakpa (his younger son); Ngawang Norbu (his grandson); Norbu Yongdrak; Gyelse Norbu Wangyal; Peling Sungtrul III Tshultrim Dorje (1598-1669); Garwang Tsultrim Gyeltsen of Bonlung; Peling Thuk-se IV Tendzin Gyurme Dorje (1641-ca1702); Rigdzin Terdak Lingpa of Mindroling (1646-1714); Peling Sungtrul IV Ngawang Kunzang Dorje (1680-1723); Peling Thuk-se V Gyurme Chodrub Pelbar (ca. 1708-1750); Pema Dondrub Drakpa; Peling Sungtrul VI Kunzang Tenpei Gyeltsen (1763-1817); Bakha Kunzang Rigdzin Dorje; Peling Sungtrul VIII Kunzang Tenpei Nyima (1843-1891); Bakha Rigdzin Khamsum Yongdrol; Orgyan Namdrol Gyatso; and Gendun Gyatso; from whom it subsequently descended to the late Dudjom Jigdrel Yeshe Dorje (1904-87).

It appears that two extant manuscript versions of the Collected Tantras, those of Tsamdrak (*mtshams brag*) and Gangteng (*sgang steng*) in Bhutan,

could well be derivatives of Ratna Lingpa's compilation. The latter has recently been photographed by Robert Mayer, but not yet catalogued. The former, in 46 short-length volumes, has been reprinted in photo offset format in Chengdu. A printed index to this edition was initially prepared by Anthony Barber in Taipei and included within the Taipei edition of the Tibetan Tripiāaka. More recently, this has been expanded into a full internet version, including all chapter titles and colophons, by David Germano's project at the University of Virginia.

Yet, the process of redaction did not end with Ratna Lingpa. During the early seventeenth century Gongra Lochen Zhenpen Dorje (1594-1654), a native of Sikkim, studied under Peling Sungtrul III Tshultrim Dorje and Sodokpa Lodro Gyeltsen (1552-ca1624); and he is best known as a teacher of Sangdak Trinle Lhundrub (1611-62), the father of Rigdzin Terdak Lingpa, of Mindroling. He prepared manuscript copies of the Collected Tantras on three occasions, integrating the compilations of Zur Zangpopel and Ratna Lingpa. The first copy was retained at his monastery of Gongra Nyesang Dorjeling in Tsang, while the other two were despatched to Kham and Kongpo. The Sakyapa lama Sangye Dorje is reported to have brought one of these manuscripts to Takbu Drakmar Monastery in the Yangtze gorge region around this time.

The great treasure-finder Rigdzin Terdak Lingpa (1646-1714), founder of Mindroling Monastery, who enjoyed the patronage of the Fifth Dalai Lama, is known to have prepared a new manuscript of the Collected Tantras in 23 long volumes (*pod chen*), inscribed in silver and gold, and based on four earlier manuscripts in his possession: those of Ugpalung, Kongpo Thangdrok, Tsangrong Monastery, and his own ancestral seat at Dargye Choling. According to his brother Lochan Dharmaśrī (1654-1717), this new manuscript edition had a more methodical structure and also a catalogue in one volume, but it is, alas, no longer extant, Mindroling having been sacked by the Dzungar Mongols in 1717. However, one of his students Dalai Qutuqtu Ngawang Sherub Gyatso from Amdo succeeded in copying the manuscript, and on returning to Amdo, he prepared a newer version in 30 volumes, inscribed in black ink. This was one of the sources utilised in the compilation of the Derge xylographic edition and it was considered at that time to be accurate and reliable.

Meanwhile, in the late 17th century, another copy of the Mindroling manuscript was brought to Takbu Drakmar monastery by Kunzang Namgyel and Kunzang Lodro, who integrated it with the earlier manuscript from Gongra Nyesang Dorjeling, and produced their own version. Their compilation was yet another important source utilised in the preparation of the Derge xylographic edition.

Rigdzin Jigme Lingpa (1730-1798), a native of Chongye Pelri, whose revelations of the *Innermost Spirituality of Longchenpa* (Klong chen snying thig) are widely practised at the present day, resolved to prepare a new manuscript edition of the Collected Tantras following the destruction of the Nyingma monastic centres of Dorje Drak and Mindroling by the Dzungar Mongols. Backed by numerous sponsors, headed by Chakzam Rinpoche of Chuwori, during the years 1771-2 he did prepare a new manuscript edition in 25 volumes— 26 with the addition of his own catalogue, including altogether 384 texts, with the first five pages of each volume written in ink made of the five precious substances: gold, silver, turquoise, coral and pearl, and the remaining folios in black ink on a white background (skya chos). The manuscript included fifty frontispiece icons depicting lineage-holders, two on the first page of each volume, and it was housed at his native residence in Chongye Pelri. The sources that he utilised included the provisional collection from Ugpalung that had been recompiled by Kunpang Drakyel, the aforementioned manuscript from Thangdrok in Kongpo, the 40 volume manuscript of Ratna Lingpa from Drushul, the 23 volume manuscript from Mindroling, and the Fifth Dalai Lama's *Record of Teachings Received* (gSan yig). Although his manuscript is no longer extant, he was the first to prepare a detailed catalogue and history of this collection, entitled the *Narrative History of the Precious Collected Tantras of the Ancient Translation School; the Ornament Covering All Jambudvīpa* (sNga 'gyur rgyud 'bum rin po che'i rtogs pa brjod pa 'dzam gling tha grur khyab pa'i rgyan). All later compilers have relied on this catalogue which is included in the nine volumes of his Collected Works. The structure of this catalogue suggests that the tantra texts of Atiyoga occupied the first nine volumes (in the sequence: Mental Class, Spatial Class and Esoteric Instructional Class). The tantra texts of Anuyoga were contained in volumes 10 and 11, while those of Mahāyoga occupied volumes 12-25.

The independent kingdom of Derge was a vital centre for the evolution of the non-sectarian (ris med) movement during the 18th and 19th centuries. King Tenpa Tsering (1678-1738) brought Derge to the zenith of its power by conquering the outlying grasslands of Dzachuka, where Dzogchen and Zhechen monasteries are located. In 1729 he founded the celebrated Derge Parkhang, which was completed in 1750 by his successors. Here, a new xylographic edition of the Kangyur was edited by Situ Chokyi Jung-ne of Pelpung (1700-74) and a new edition of the Tengyur commentaries by Zhuchen Tsultrim Rinchen. Although Derge Gonchen itself espoused the Ngor tradition of Sakya, Nyingma influence reached its height here during this period. The king's successor Sawang Zangpo died in his 25th year and power was then held by his Queen Gajeza Tsewang Lhamo during the infancy of the crown prince. The queen was closely aligned with Jigme Lingpa's student Dodrubchen I Jigme Trinle Ozer (1743-1821), who aroused her interest in and devotion to the Nyingma tradition in particular.

In 1794 Rigdzin Thok-me Lingpa, a student of the influential treasure-finder Nyima Drakpa, donated one thousand silver srang to support the carving of a set of xylographs for the Collected Tantras. The queen then commissioned Getse Paṇḍita Gyurme Tshewang Chodrub of Katok and Pema Namdak to collate and edit a new master edition, which was prepared between 1794 and 1798, along with further sets of xylographs for the Collected Works of Longchen Rabjampa and Jigme Lingpa. This new compilation of the Collected Tantras, which is still extant in Derge Parkhang, having survived the Cultural Revolution intact, comprises 26 long-folio volumes, and 414 texts, printed in vermilion ink. There are 56 icons depicting lineage holders, from Samantabhadra to Prince Tsewang Dorje Rigdzin of Derge, two on the frontispiece folio of each volume.

This compilation is renowned for its distinct editorial methodology, outlined by Getse Paṇḍita himself, in his accompanying catalogue, entitled *Discourse Resembling A Divine Drum* (bDe bar gshegs pa'i sde snod rdo rje theg pa snga 'gyur rgyud 'bum rin po che'i rtogs pa brjod pa lha'i rnga bo che lta bu'i gdam.) which was written in 1797. As he states therein, various sources for the Collected Tantras were consulted, including the aforementioned manuscripts from Chongye Pelri, Amdo, and Takbu Drakmar, as well as others from Katok, Pelpung, Gonjo Jasang Solu, and Dzogchen—the last of these having been compiled by Dzogchen II

Gyurme Thekchok Tendzin (1699-1757) on the basis of the earlier Gongra and Mindroling manuscripts. Individual texts within the collection were then compared with other well established editions, including the Seventeen Tantras of the Esoteric Instructional Class (rDzogs chen man ngag rgyud bco bdun). In some cases, texts, such as Guhyasamāja Tantra, overlapped with the tantras of the new translation schools, and in others the terminology was checked against that employed in the Seven Treasuries of Longchenpa (Klong chen mdzod bdun). Sanskrit transcriptions were standardised, and archaicisms sometimes replaced by new orthography. The proof readers also claim to have frequently resorted to intellectual reasoning during the editorial process.

The actual catalogue to the Derge edition of the Collected Tantras, which is appended to Getse Paṇḍita's treatise, naturally follows the order of the texts as they were compiled in Derge. Volumes 1-6 (KA-CHA) contain the tantra texts of Atiyoga, here ordered in the sequence: Yang ti cycle, sPyi ti cycle, Esoteric Instructions (Yang gsang bla med cycle, gSang ba cycle, Phyi nang cycles), Spatial Class and Mental Class. Volumes 7-8 (JA-NYA) contain the text of Anuyoga, and Vols 9-24 (TA-YA) the texts of Mahāyoga. Volume 25 (RA) contains supplementary texts of Atiyoga, and the catalogue is placed at the end, in Volume 26 (A).

Copies of this Derge xylographic edition and catalogue are to be found outside Tibet. Short modern catalogues of the compilation, omitting chapter titles, have been produced by Thubten Chodar (op cit, pp. 58-254), Jean-Luc Achard (electronic journal, 2003), Giacomella Orofino, Cathy Cantwell, Adelheid Pfandt and others. Partial longer catalogues including all chapter titles and colophons have also been prepared in unpublished formats by Giacomella Orofino and Jean-Luc Achard. Much of this previous work is now being transformed into an internet version at the University of Virginia.

There is also an elegant extant manuscript of the Collected Tantras, that bears some doxographical relationship to the Derge edition, in thirty volumes (originally 33 vols.), twenty-nine of which are housed in the India Office Library in London (Waddell Collection, 1904-5), and the other (vol. 1) in the Bodleian Library in Oxford. It has been suggested that this manuscript, now known as the Rigdzin edition, is possibly the work of

Trinle Dudjom Gonang Choje (1726-1789), a student of Katok Rigdzin Tsewang Norbu (1698-1755) whose icon is given pride of place in the introductory volume. The manuscript has been comprehensively catalogued by Robert Mayer and Cathy Cantwell in an internet version, and a published paper version is forthcoming (see Cantwell, Mayer and Fischer, 2000).

Then there is the Kyirong manuscript, attributed to students of Trinle Dudjom Gonang Choje, and preserved in Kathmandu. The Kyirong area where Katok Rigdzin Tsewang Norbu himself passed away is known to have been a centre for Nyingma activity in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. This manuscript has been documented by Franz Karl Ehrhard, who also made available photocopies of a traditional catalogue for the Nubri edition of NW Nepal, with which it has a doxographical relationship.

In 1973, a new Indian reprint of the Collected Tantras was prepared under the patronage of HH Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche based on a manuscript preserved at Tingkye. This reprint comprises thirty-six volumes, of which vols. 1-10 include the tantra-texts of Atiyoga, vols. 11-13 include the sūtra and tantra-texts of Anuyoga and vols. 14-33 include the texts of Mahāyoga. Volume 34 contains Rigdzin Jigme Lingpa's catalogue, while volumes 35-36 contain the index of Gyurme Tshewang Chodrub. A modern catalogue to this edition of the Collected Tantras by Eiichi Kaneko was published in Japan in 1982, and this work is currently being reformatted for internet publication at the University of Virginia.

The reader should also be aware that there are other partial extant compilations, some of which correspond to sections of the Collected Tantras, such as the Seventeen Tantras of the Nyingma School (rNying ma'i rgyud bcu bdun), and others which contain considerable variations, such as the The Rgyud 'bum of Vairocana. In fact, since so many distinct manuscript versions of the Collected Tantras have been produced over the centuries by diverse lineage-holders with their own distinctive regional affiliations, it is not surprising that they frequently differ in their content and arrangement.

It is on account of its widely recognised editorial accuracy that reference numbers to the prestigious Derge xylographic edition are given precedence in the present work. However, some references are also made to the Tingkye edition, on account of its convenience and accessibility. Readers should also be aware that the arrangement of the Derge edition differs markedly from that of Jigme Lingpa's earlier catalogue by including extensive series of tantra texts discovered as gter ma, as well as Lochen Dharmaśrī's commentaries on the Guhyagarbha Tantra and a supplementary anthology of Atiyoga texts in volume 25.

Although at this juncture, a systematic study of the literature contained in Derge vols. 1-8 (KA-NYA) and vol. 25 (RA) would contribute definitively to our knowledge of Atiyoga and Anuyoga, it is the immediate concern of this introduction to focus on the texts of Mahāyoga, since it is within the Mahāyoga category of the 'Gyud 'bum that the Guhyagarbha Tantra is to be found, despite the connection with Atiyoga which has been drawn by some later Tibetan commentators.

### 3. THE TEXTS OF MAHĀYOGA

The texts of Mahāyoga are divided into two classes— tantras (rgyud sde) and means for attainment (sgrub sde). The former (Derge vols. 9-14, Tingkye vols. 14-19) comprise the exoteric corpus of literature from which the latter, the esoteric practices (Derge vols.15-24, Tingkye Vols. 20-33), are drawn. Tingkye vols. 31-32 also respectively contain the general tantras (spyi rgyud) and the particular tantras (sgos rgyud) associated with the original Indian gter ma recension of the *Tantra of the Gathering of the Sugatas of the Eight Transmitted Precepts* (sGrub chen bka' brgyad dbe 'dus kyi rgyud), from which the later Tibetan gter ma cycles of the Eight Transmitted Precepts (bka' brgyad) derive.

The class of means for attainment (sgrub sde) has five main sections, corresponding to the five supramundane meditational deities, viz. Yamāntaka ('Jam dpal gzhin rje gshad pa'i rgyud skor, Derge vols. 15-17, Tingkye vols. 20-22, T. 838), Hayagrīva/ Aśvottama (dPal rta mgrin padma dbang chen rta mchog rol pa'i rgyud sde rnams, Derge vols. 17-18, Tingkye vols. 23-24), śrīheruka (dPal yang dag thugs kyi rgyud sde rnams, Derge vols. 18-19, Tingkye vol. 25), Vajrāmōta ('Chi med bdud rtsi yon tan gyi

rgyud sde rnams, Derge vols. 19-20, Tingkye vol. 26, T. 841), and Vajrakīla/Vajrakumāra (bCom ldan 'das dpal rdo rje phur pa'i rgyud sde rnams, Derge vols. 20-22, Tingkye vols. 27-29). The following three mundane meditational deities are also included: Mātaraī (Ma mo srid pa'i dzong lung chen mo yum bzung ma'i dngos grub chen mo'i rgyud rnams dang ma mo rtsa rgyud 'bum tig gi skor, Derge vols. 22-23, Tingkye vols. 30-31, Vol. 33, T. 842), Lokastotrapūjā (bstan srung 'jig rten mchod bstod, Derge vol. 24, Tingkye vol. 32, T. 844), and Vajramantrabhīru (rmod pa drag sngags, Derge vol. 24, Tingkye vol. 32, T. 843).

The class of tantras (rgyud sde) is otherwise known as the Eighteen Tantrapitaka of Mahāyoga, a basic cycle of texts traditionally held to have been subdivided from the Hundred Thousand Verses of the Magical Net (sGyu 'phrul stong phrag brgya pa) by Kukkurāja, on whom see below, pp. 00-00. Different enumerations of these Eighteen Tantrapitaka have been recorded in the works of Longchen Rabjampa, Pawo Tsuklak Trengwa, Terdak Lingpa, Zhechen Gyaltshab Pema Namgyel and others.

In the *Thunderous Melody of Brahmā, A General Introduction to the Mantras* (sNgags kyi spyi don tshangs dbyangs 'brug sgra), Longchen Rabjampa (1308-63) classifies the eighteen according to buddha-body, -speech, -mind, -attributes, -activities, and all-embracing universality as follows:

1. Langchen Rabok, the tantra representing the body aspect of buddha-body (sku'i sku rgyud Glang po rab 'bog);
2. Langpo Churjuk, the tantra representing the speech aspect of buddha-body (sku'i gsung rgyud Glang po chur 'jug);
3. Buddhasamāyoga, the tantra representing the mind aspect of buddha-body (sku'i thugs rgyud Sangs rgyas mnyam sbyor);
4. Riwo Tsekpa, the tantra representing the body aspect of buddha-speech (gsung gi sku rgyud Ri bo brtsegs pa);
5. Padma Wangchen, the tantra representing the speech aspect of buddha-speech (gsung gi gsung rgyud Padma dbang chen);
6. Candraguhyatilaka, the tantra representing the mind aspect of buddha-speech (gsung gi thugs rgyud Zla gsang thig le);
7. Tsemo Dupa, the tantra representing the body aspect of buddha-mind (thugs kyi sku rgyud rTse mo 'dus pa);

8. Cikle Tropa, the tantra representing the speech aspect of buddha-mind (thugs kyi gsung rgyud gCig las 'phros pa);
9. Guhyasamāja, the tantra representing the mind aspect of buddha-mind (thugs kyi thugs rgyud gSang ba 'dus pa);
10. Dronme Barwa, the tantra representing the body aspect of buddha-attributes (yon tan gyi sku rgyud sGron me 'bar ba);
11. Dutsi Samaya Bumde, the tantra representing the speech aspect of buddha-attributes (yon tan gyi gsung rgyud bDud rtsi samaya 'bum sde);
12. śrīparamādyā, the tantra representing the mind aspect of buddha-attributes (yon tan gyi thugs rgyud dPal mchog dang po);
13. Paltreng Karpo, the tantra representing the body aspect of buddha-activities (phrin las kyi sku rgyud dPal phreng dkar po);
14. Mamo Gyulung, the tantra representing the speech aspect of buddha-activities (phrin las kyi gsung rgyud Ma mo rgyud lung);
15. Vidyottama Bumde, the tantra representing the mind aspect of buddha-activities (phrin las kyi thugs rgyud Bidyotamala 'bum sde);
16. Thabzhak, the tantra representing the body aspect of all-embracing universality (spyi'i sku rgyud Thabs zhags);
17. Damtshik Kopa, the tantra representing the speech aspect of all-embracing universality (spyi'i gsung rgyud Dam tshig bkod pa);
18. Guhyagarbha-Māyājāla, the tantra representing the mind aspect of all-embracing universality (spyi'i thugs rgyud gSang ba sgyu 'phrul).

Pawo Tsuklak Trengwa (1504-66) in his *Scholar's Feast of Doctrinal History* (*Chos 'byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston*), enumerates the eighteen differently, but with the same basic sixfold classification:

1. Sangs rgyas mnyam sbyor, Glang chen rab 'bog, Glang chen mtshor zhugs te sku'i rgyud gsum;
2. Zla gsang thig le, gCig las 'phro pa, Du ma 'phro pa ste gsung gi rgyud gsum;
3. gSang ba 'dus pa, Ri bo brtsegs pa, rTse gcig 'dus pa ste thugs kyi rgyud gsum;
4. dPal mchog dang po, bDud rtsi mchog dang po, Yid bzhin nor bu'i rgyud ste yon tan gyi rgyud gsum;
5. Karma ma la, sGron me 'bar ba, Kilaya yig 'bru bcu gnyis te phrin las kyi rgyud gsum;

6. sGyu 'phrul dra ba, Dam tshig bkod pa, Thabs kyi zhags pa ste spyi'i rgyud gsum.

The enumeration which generally gained acceptance from the time of Rigdzin Terdak Lingpa onwards and which corresponds quite closely to the structure of the Tingkye manuscript edition of the Collected Tantras is that given by Zhechen Gyaltsab Pema Namgyel (1871-1926) in his *Pool of White Lotuses: an Abridged Discourse on the Origin of the Eight Chariots forming the Lineage of the Means for Attainment* (sGrub brgyud shing rta brgyad kyi byung ba brjod pa'i gdam mdor bsdus legs bshad padma dkar po'i rdzings bu), and inferred by Dudjom Rinpoche in *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism: Its Fundamentals and History*:

The five great tantras of buddha-body, speech, mind, attributes and activities are respectively Buddhasamāyoga (Derge vols. 11-12, Tingkye vol. 16, T. 366-7), Candraguhyatilaka (Derge vol. 12, Tingkye vol. 16, T. 477), Guhyasamāja (Derge vol. 12, Tingkye vol. 17, T. 442-3), śrīparamādyā (Derge vol. 12, Tingkye vol. 17, T. 487), and Karmamāla (Derge vol. 12, Tingkye vol. 17); the five tantras concerned with means for attainment are Heruka rol pa (Derge vol. 13, Tingkye vol. 18), rTa mchog rol pa (Derge vol. 13, Tingkye vol. 18, T. 839), sNying rje rol pa (Derge vol. 13, Tingkye vol. 18, T. 840), bDud rtsi rol pa (Derge vol. 13, Tingkye vol. 18), and Phur pa bcu gnyis pa (Derge vol. 13, Tingkye vol. 19); The five tantras concerned with conduct are Ri bo brtsegs pa (Tingkye vol. 6), Ye shes rnam glog (Derge vol. 7, Tingkye vol. 12, T. 830), Dam tshig bkod pa (Derge vol. 5, Tingkye vol. 12), Ting 'dzin rtse gcig (Derge vol. 2, Tingkye vol. 8), and gLang chen rab 'bog (Derge, vol. 13, Tingkye vol. 19); the two supplementary tantras are rNam snang sgyu 'phrul drva ba (Tingkye vol. 19, T. 466) and Thabs kyi zhags pa (Derge vol. 13, Tingkye vol. 19, T. 835); and the single tantra which summarises all the others is Guhyagarbha (Derge vols. 9-11, Tingkye vols. 14-16, T. 832-837).

All these doxographical systems in common give precedence to the Guhyagarbha Tantra and its cycle of texts, known as the Magical Net (Māyājāla/ sGyu 'phrul drva ba), whether it is classified as the tantra representing the mind aspect of all-embracing universality (spyi'i thugs rgyud), the tantra of universality (spyi rgyud), the universal among tantras of universality (spyi'i spyi rgyud), or the single tantra which summarises

all the others (thams cad kyi bsdus don lta bu'i rgyud sde gcig). This is also implicit in the name of the original basic tantra from which all these eighteen texts were reputedly subdivided by Kukkurāja.

#### 4. THE MĀYĀJĀLA CYCLE

The corpus of tantra texts known as the Magical Net (Māyājāla), to which the *Guhyagarbha Tantra* belongs, comprises both an eightfold and a fourfold division. It is indeed remarkable that this extensive cycle of texts has until relatively recently been ignored by western scholarship, when it would seem to merit the same attention given by Edward Conze and his successors to the Prajñāpāramitā literature, a renowned voluminous cycle within the sūtra tradition. Early historical and literary references to certain texts connected with the Māyājāla cycle are found in the Dunhuang manuscripts, as well as in the writings of Nubchen Sangye Yeshe (fl. 9th century) and Rongzom Chokyi Zangpo (fl. 11th century), as S.G. Karmay has indicated. Among Nubchen's compositions there is reported to have been a *Commentary on the Realisation of the Eighty Chapter Magical Net* (sGyu 'phrul brgyad cu pa'i mngon rtogs 'grel) which is no longer extant.

The earliest extant specific references to the eightfold and fourfold divisions per se are probably to be found in the various recensions of the *Injunctions of Padmasambhava* (Padma'i bka' thang), among which the *Injunctions of Padmasambhava Discovered at Crystal Rock* (Padma bka' thang shel brag ma), an extant gter ma source attributed to Yarje Orgyan Lingpa (1323-c.1360) contains the following verses:

The fourfold division of the *Magical Net* including the *Magical Net of Vairocana* (rNam snang la sogs sgyu 'phrul sde bzhi dang),  
The eightfold division of the *Magical Net* including the  
Guhya[garbha], *Magical Net of Vajrasattva* (gSang ba rdor sems sgyu 'phrul sde tshan brgyad).

The same text additionally asserts that Padmasambhava himself drew up the eightfold division of the Māyājāla cycle (sGyu 'phrul sde brgyad) with the assistance of the translators Kawa Paltsek and Chokrolui Gyeltsen.

Sangye Lingpa (1340-1396) in the *Golden Rosary Injunction of Padmasambhava* (bKa' thang ser phreng), provides the following complete enumeration of the eightfold division, indicating the distinct emphasis of each text:

1. Tantra of the Secret Indestructible Reality, from the Magical Net, which reveals mind and pristine cognition to be naturally [manifesting] (sems dang ye shes rang la bstan pa'i rgyud sGyu 'phrul rdo rje gsang ba);
2. Forty-chapter Tantra, from the Magical Net, which presents the aspects of buddha-activity (phrin las kha tshar ston pa'i rgyud sGyu 'phrul bzhi bcu pa);
3. Tantra of the Indestructible Spiritual Teacher, from the Magical Net, which crystalises the essence of the empowerments (dbang gi ngo bo mngon du gyur pa'i phyir sGyu 'phrul rdo rje bla ma'i rgyud);
4. Tantra of Supplementary Points, from the Magical Net, which discloses the commitments and the esoteric instructions concerning the view (dam tshig dang lta ba'i man ngag ston pa sGyu 'phrul le lag don bsdus kyi rgyud);
5. Eight-chapter Tantra, from the Magical Net, which is the key to this entire tantra [cycle] (rgyud kyi lde mig tu gyur pa'i rgyud sGyu 'phrul le'u brgyad pa);
6. Tantra of the Goddess, from the Magical Net, which manifests the play of spiritual emanation (rol pa mngon du gyur par bya ba'i phyir Lha mo sgyu 'phrul gyi rgyud);
7. Eighty-chapter Tantra, from the Magical Net, which supplements the preceding texts (de rnams kyi ma tshang ba kha skong ba'i rgyud sGyu 'phrul brgyad bcu pa);
8. Tantra of Manjuśrī, from the Magical Net, which expounds the supreme ultimate pristine cognition (don dam ye shes chen po bshad pa 'Jam dpal sgyu 'phrul drva ba'i rgyud).

This, significantly, is the enumeration of the eightfold division to have been accepted by later historians and commentators, such as Pawo Tsuklak Trengwa (1504-1566), Sodokpa Lodro Gyeltsen (1552-1624), and Lochen Dharmaśrī (1654-1717). In Pawo's *Scholar's Feast of Doctrinal History* (Chos 'byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston), these eight primary texts are described in the following terms:

1. Guhyagarbha, the root-tantra which presents all things as naturally manifesting (thams cad rang snang du ston pa rtsa rgyud gSang ba'i snying po);
2. Tantra of the Goddess from the Magical Net, which clearly describes the play of spiritual emanation (rol pa mngon par brjod pa Lha mo sgyu 'phrul);
3. Eight-chapter Tantra, from the Magical Net, which is a presentation of the maṇḍalas (dkyil 'khor ston pa sGyu 'phrul brgyad pa);
4. Forty-chapter Tantra, from the Magical Net, which is a presentation of buddha-activities (phrin las ston pa sGyu 'phrul bzhi bcu pa);
5. Tantra of the Spiritual Teacher, from the Magical Net, which emphasises the empowerments (dbang gtso bor ston pa sGyu 'phrul bla ma);
6. Eighty-chapter Tantra from the Magical Net, which conclusively presents the array of buddha-attributes (yon tan mthar phyin par ston pa sGyu 'phrul brgyad bcu pa);
7. Great Tantra, from the Magical Net, which comprehensively presents all the pitakas (sde snod yongs la khyab par ston pa sGyu 'phrul dra ba chen po);
8. Tantra of Supplementary Points, from the Magical Net, which emphasises the commitments (dam tshig gtso bor ston pa sGyu 'phrul le lag).

The same author also provides a set of **four exegetical tantras** (bshad rgyud), which do not correspond to the so-called fourfold division of the Magical Net (sGyu 'phrul sde bzhi), namely:

1. Nucleus of Pristine Cognition, which gradually presents the path of liberation (grol lam rim gyis ston pa ye shes snying po);
2. Mirror of Indestructible Reality, which immediately presents [the path of liberation] (cig char ston pa rDo rje me long);
3. Penetration of Indestructible Reality, which gradually presents the path of skilful means (thabs lam rim gyis ston pa rDo rje thal ba);
4. Ocean of Indestructible Reality, which immediately presents [the path of skilful means] (cig char ston pa rDo rje rgya mtsho).

The standard enumeration of the fourfold division of the Magical Net (sGyu 'phrul sde bzhi) is that given by Longchen Rabjampa in the following passage from his *Dispelling the Darkness of the Ten Directions*

(Phyogs bcu mun sel), and already implied in the writings of Yarje Orgyan Lingpa:

This [cycle of the Magical Net] also comprises four sections, namely, the Tantra of Vajrasattva, from the Magical Net (Derge vol. 10), which presents all things of cyclic existence (saṃsāra) and nirvāṇa to be naturally manifesting and indivisible; the Tantra of Vairocana, from the Magical Net (Derge vol. 10, Tingkye vol. 19, T. 466) which extensively presents ritual activities and feast-offerings; the Tantra of the Goddess, from the Magical Net (Derge vol. 11, Tingkye vol. 15, T. 836) which clearly presents the play of spiritual emanation; and the Tantra of Mañjuśrī, from the Magical Net (Derge vol. 10, Tingkye vol. 15, T. 360) which comprehensively presents the vehicles [that lead to buddhahood].

Longchen Rabjampa additionally claims that the eightfold division is a subclassification of the above-mentioned Tantra of Vajrasattva, from the Magical Net, providing us with a different enumeration:

The Tantra of Vajrasattva from the Magical Net itself has eight sections, namely, the Tantra of the Secret Nucleus (Guhyagarbha Tantra, Derge, vol. 9, Tingkye vol. 14, T. 832) which presents mind and pristine cognition as naturally manifesting; the Forty-Chapter Tantra, from the Magical Net (Derge vol. 10, Tingkye Vol. 14) which perfectly presents the buddha-activities; the Eight-Chapter Tantra, from the Magical Net (Derge vol. 10, Tingkye Vol. 14) which perfectly presents the maṇḍalas; the Tantra of the Spiritual Teacher, from the Magical Net (Derge vol. 11, Tingkye vol. 14, T. 837) which clearly presents the empowerments; the Tantra of Supplementary Points, from the Magical Net (Derge vol. 10, Tingkye Vol. 14) which emphatically presents the commitments; the Eighty-Chapter Tantra, from the Magical Net (Derge vol. 11, Tingkye Vol 14, T. 834) which extensively presents buddha-attributes; the Mirror of Indestructible Reality (Derge vol. 11, Tingkye Vol. 15, T. 833) which clearly presents the symbolic body-colours and hand-held implements of the hundred deities; the Oceanic Tantra, from the Magical Net (Derge vol. 10, Tingkye Vol. 15) which clearly presents the generation stage of meditation; and the Penetrating Tantra, from the Magical Net (Derge vol. 11, Tingkye Vol. 15) which clearly presents the path of skilful means.

Of the texts included in the eightfold division by Sangye Lingpa, and later by Pawo Tsuklak Trengwa, Sodokpa Lodro Gyeltshan and Lochen Dharmaśrī, Longchen Rabjampa assigns the Lha mo sgyu 'phrul and the 'Jam dpal sgyu 'phrul to the fourfold division, substituting for them three exegetical tantras— rDo rje me long, sGyu 'phrul rgya mtsho, and sGyu 'phrul thal ba.

The tantra texts of this Māyājāla cycle which are now extant comprise three volumes of the Derge xylograph collection (vols. 9-11) and two volumes of the Tingkye manuscript (vols. 14-15), along with a substantial portion of volume 16 and one text in volume 19. In Tingkye they are hierarchically arranged, with the texts accepted by both systems as root tantras (rtsa rgyud) first, followed by the exegetical tantras, although one should note that there is some ambiguity because three of the latter are held to be root-tantras by Longchenpa and another two are held to be root-tantras by Sangye Lingpa and Pawo Tsuklak Trengwa. The titles of these extant tantras are listed below, along with a brief resume of each. The detailed contents of the three versions of the Guhyagarbha in particular are given in the tables which follow, and the Tibetan chapter titles and pagination for the entire section may be found in the modern catalogues published by Kaneko and others.

## THE NINETEEN EXTANT TANTRAS OF THE CYCLE

1. Tantra of the Secret Nucleus Which is Definitive with respect to the Real (Guhyagarbhatattvaviniścayamahātantra/ rGyud gsang ba'i snying po de kho na nyid nges pa), Chs. 22, Derge vol. 9 (TA), ff. 1-31; Tingkye vol. 14, pp. 1-61.

The Guhyagarbha is the primary tantra text belonging to the cycle of the Magical Net. A full translation and edition are published in this book, along with the interlinear commentary of Longchen Rabjampa. The text is said to present all things as naturally manifesting (thams cad rang snang ston pa), or to present mind and pristine cognition as naturally manifesting (sems dang ye shes rang snang du ston pa). Its maṇḍala is that of the forty-two peaceful and fifty-eight wrathful deities that are well known from later gter ma compilations. The detailed contents of this shorter version are

compared with those of two longer versions in the tables below. The text was translated from Sanskrit on four occasions, but principally by Nyak Jñānakumāra and Ma Rinchen Chok, following the instruction of Vimalamitra.

2. Subsequent Tantra of the Glorious Secret Nucleus (dPal gsang ba'i snying po'i phyi ma), Chs. 5, Tingkye vol. 14, pp. 62-67.

This text supplements the former, emphasising the unique buddha-body as the basis of all spiritual attainments, the projection of the maṇḍalas, the meditative instructions concerning the control of focal points of seminal energy (thig le) and currents of vital energy (rlung) within the subtle body, and the purification of the five psycho-physical components (phung po). Translated by Jñānagarbha and lotsāwa Vairocana.

3. Eighty-chapter Tantra, from the Magical Net (sGyu 'phrul brgyad bcu pa), Chs. 82, Derge vol. 11 (DA), ff. 148-248; Tingkye vol, 14, pp. 67-317.

This, the long version of the Guhyagarbha, emphasises the buddha-attributes (yon tan). See below for a comparison between its eighty-two chapters and the twenty-two chapters of the primary Guhyagarbhatantra in tabular form. It was translated into Tibetan by Vimalamitra and Nyak Jñānakumāra (and earlier by Padmasambhava and Namkhei Nyingpo).

4. Forty-chapter Tantra, from the Magical Net (sGyu 'phrul bzhi bcu pa), Chs. 46, Derge vol. 10 (THA), ff. 135-182; Tingkye vol. 14, pp. 317-415.

This intermediate length version of the Guhyagarbha emphasises the buddha-activities (phrin las). Its forty-six chapters are also outlined in the table below. Translators unknown.

5. Tantra of Supplementary Points, from the Magical Net (sGyu 'phrul le lag), Chs. 33, Derge vol. 10 (THA), ff. 182-238; Tingkye vol. 14, pp. 415-549.

Emphasising commitments (dam tshig), the Tantra of Supplementary Points begins in its introductory chapter by showing how all sentient beings and environments are gathered together in the central deity of the maṇḍala, who is known as the Supreme Embodiment (bdag nyid chen po)

of Samantabhadra and Samantabhadrī, endowed with the inexhaustible adornments of buddha-body, -speech, -mind and -resources. The thirty-two following chapters closely correspond in their titles, contents and structure to those of the *Root Tantra of the Secret Nucleus of Indestructible Reality* (rDo rje gsang ba'i snying po rtsa ba'i rgyud) contained in Derge, vol. 11 (DA), and Tingkye vol. 16.

Initially, they describe the gathering of all phenomena in expansive emptiness (stong pa nyid), which is the nature of the female buddha Samantabhadrī, the absorption of all phenomena in the seal of the buddha-body free from substantiality, and the presence of the seed of actual reality (chos nyid) or emptiness in all beings, regardless of their differing degrees of intelligence. Thereafter the text successively describes the emanation of the celestial palace (vimāna) of the meditational deities, the transformation of all phenomena into the wrathful deities and their ensuing purification through the fire of pristine cognition, the procedures of “further ritual service” (nye bsnyen) associated with the wrathful deities, the external manifestation of their maṇḍala which arises through compassionate spirituality, the burnt offerings associated with the four rites of enlightened activity, the symbolism of sacramental offerings, along with the means of securing them through mantra recitation and hand-gestures, and the consequent fruitional attainment, known as the vision of Vajrasattva.

There then follows a series of chapters concerning the making of medicinal elixir (sman sgrub), the meditative stabilities associated with the most secret maṇḍala, the emanation of the deities' seals (phyag rgya) or hand-emblems, the lesser spiritual attainments conferred by Mahādeva and the Four Guardian Kings, and the means of constructing stūpas.

The text then goes on to discuss the nature of the so-called “twenty-one bases for sense perception”, and the resulting supreme accomplishment attained when the perfections (pha rol du phyin pa), levels (sa), means (thabs) and buddhafi elds (zhing khams) are all gathered in the Supreme Embodiment of Samantabhadra and Samantabhadrī, from which the maṇḍala of meditational deities emerges.

Finally, the main topic is introduced— a detailed exegesis of the basic and ancillary commitments (dam tshig), associated with this vision of Vajrasattva and the maṇḍala of meditational deities. Translators unknown.

6. Eight-chapter Tantra, from the Magical Net (sGyu 'phrul brgyad pa), Chs. 8, Derge, vol. 10 (THA), ff. 114-123; Tingkye vol. 14, pp. 549-571.

Emphasising the maṇḍala (dkyil 'khor) of meditational deities, this text describes the union of the [peaceful] meditational deities with the natural Great Perfection (rdzogs chen), the emanation of the maṇḍala of wrathful deities therefrom in a cloud-like manner, the mantra syllables forming the maṇḍala of their buddha-speech, which are recited in the context of feast-offering ceremonies, as well as the nature of the actual sacraments of offerings and commitments by which the deities are pleased. Translators unknown.

7. Tantra of the Supreme Spritual Teacher, from the Magical Net (sGyu 'phrul dra ba bla ma chen po), Chs. 13, Derge vol. 11 (DA), ff. 34-60; Tingkye, vol. 14, pp. 572-638.

Emphasising empowerment (dbang bskur), the Tantra of the Supreme Spritual Teacher identifies the nature of supreme bliss with the expanse of reality (dbyings) and the pristine cognition (ye shes) of the buddhas, and discusses the ultimate nature of mind in its non-dual disposition. To achieve this, the yogin visualises that the maṇḍala of meditational deities is emanated and absorbed, along with their respective mantras and sealing hand-gestures, thereby conferring the appropriate commitments and empowerments. A self-disciplined mode of conduct is adopted with an attitude of compassion, and the maṇḍala of meditational deities is then pleased by means of feast-offerings (tshogs), in consequence of which malign forces are subjugated and the greatness of buddha-body, -speech and -mind is made manifest. The text concludes with a teaching on wrathful mantras, the commitments associated with the practice of the inner tantras, and the supreme bliss experienced by bodhisattvas who have received these essential instructions. Translators unknown.

8. Exegetical Tantra of the Goddess, from the Magical Net (bShad rgyud lha mo sgyu 'phrul), Chs. 13, Derge vol. 11 (DA), ff. 1-34; Tingkye, vol. 15, pp. 1-96.

Emphasising the play of spiritual emanation that emerges from the nature of actual reality (chos nyid kyi rol pa), this exegetical tantra known as the Tantra of the Goddess presents the maṇḍala of the buddhas and the way in which all obscurations are removed in relation to it. Through the blissful yoga associated with the body, speech and mind of all the buddhas, the experience of non-duality is thereby introduced. There then follows a chapter on the sacred dances which please the buddhas, and the commitments associated with the yogic practices relating to the experience of supreme bliss. In this way, the secret maṇḍala of all the buddhas is revealed in the real nature of their supreme buddha-body, speech and mind. Later the text discusses the emanation of the wrathful meditational deities, the wheel of pristine cognition which emerges from them, the mantra recitations which please them, and the gathering of acolytes by the Herukas. The text concludes with a short section on the key to the dissemination of the Fourfold Division of the Magical Net (sGyu sprul sde bzhi). Translated by Vilāsavajra and Ma Rinchen Chok.

9. Tantra of Mañjuśrī, from the Magical Net ('Jam dpal sgyu 'phrul dra ba), Chs. 14, Derge vol. 10 (THA), ff. 123-135; Tingkye vol. 15, pp. 97-118;

The Tantra of Mañjuśrī from the Magical Net, also known as the Litany of the Names of Mañjuśrī (Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti, T. 360) in its later translation, emphasises the cohesion of all the piāakas (sde snod) or vehicles (theg pa). Its successive themes concern the seed of buddha-nature (rigs) that is latent in all living beings, the manifest awakening that is achieved through the Magical Net, and the consequent emergence of enlightened mind (byang chub sems). The text concludes with a series of eulogies associated with each of the five pristine cognitions (ye shes lnga), and with the attributes (yon tan) of the meditational deities, along with their respective mantras. Original translators unknown. Later translated by Kamalagupta and Rinchen Zangpo.

10. Mirror of All Secrets of Vajrasattva, from the Magical Net (rDo rje sems dpa' sgyu 'phrul dra ba gsang ba thams cad kyi me long), Chs. 13 + root-text, Derge vol. 11 (DA), ff. 82-148; Tingkye vol. 15, pp. 119-310.

Emphasising the immediate aspect of the path of liberation (grol lam cig char) or the body-colours and symbolic hand-implements of the meditational deities (sku mdog dang phyag mtshan), the Mirror of All Secrets of Vajrasattva sequentially presents the fundamental topics of the tantras: view, conduct, maṇḍala, empowerment, commitment, attainment, enlightened activity, and ritual, as well as the effortless spontaneous presence of the maṇḍala of meditational deities that arises through these practices. Translated by Vimalamitra and Nyak Jñānakumāra.

11. Tantra of the Nucleus of Pristine Cognition, from the Glorious Magical Net (dPal sgyu 'phrul dra ba ye shes snying po'i rgyud), Chs. 13, Tingkye, vol. 15, pp. 310-338.

Emphasising the gradual aspect of the path of liberation (grol lam rim gyis), the Tantra of the Nucleus of the Pristine Cognition concerns the five aspects of seminal "enlightened mind", and the emergence therefrom of compassionate spirituality and pristine cognition, along with the seed-syllables associated with the meditational deities and their corresponding meditative stabilities (ting nge 'dzin). The text then discusses the seal associated with the practices of supreme bliss, the consecration of awareness through the practice of secret mantras, the radiance of the Great Seal (phyag rgya chen po), the maṇḍala in which perfect skilful means (thabs) and discriminative awareness (shes rab) are united, the descent of pristine cognition (ye shes dbab pa) from the meditational deities into the yogin, the consequent spontaneous presence (lhun grub) of the meditational deities, and their secret maṇḍala. Translated by Nubchen Sangye Yeshe (Dorje Yangwangter).

12. Oceanic Tantra, from the Magical Net (sGyu 'phrul rgya mtsho), Chs. 22, Derge vol. 10 (THA), ff. 279-313; Tingkye vol. 15, pp. 339-420.

Emphasising the immediate aspect of the path of skilful means (thabs lam cig char) or the generation stage (bskyed rim) of meditation, the Oceanic Tantra concerns the five aspects of seminal "enlightened mind" (byang

sems rnam lnga), which are established as the nature of all phenomena, and the emergence of the maṇḍalas of buddha-speech and buddha-mind therefrom, along with their consecrations and feast-offerings (tshogs). The text then presents the path of this secret vehicle and its secret meanings, the engagement in the practice of the five impurities, and the transformation of the peaceful deities into their indestructible wrathful nature through which the mundane body, speech and mind are consecrated. Translated by Vimalamitra and Nyak Jñānakumāra.

13. Penetrating Tantra, from the Magical Net (sGyu 'phrul thal ba'i rgyud), Chs. 26, Derge vol. 11 (DA), ff. 249-294; Tingkye vol. 15, pp. 421-538.

Emphasising the gradual aspect of the path of skilful means (thabs lam rim gyis), the Penetrating Tantra concerns the five aspects of seminal "enlightened mind", and the natural manifestation of buddha-body, -speech and -mind, which are attained through the practices of skilful means. In this way, the text focusses on the images experienced in meditative stability, as they emerge from "seminal enlightened mind" (byang sems) and the development of buddha-body, -speech and -mind through the secret mantras, the relevant commitments, empowerments, and the discipline of the yogin's own awareness (rig pa'i rtul zhugs).

Then the main themes of the text are introduced: engagement in the sexual yoga of skilful means, the actual skilful means which are to be employed, and a discussion concerning the liberation achieved by those buddhas of the past and yogins of the present who possess this technique, and the corresponding lack of liberation in those who do not. Finally, the text discusses the secret points of seminal energy (thig le) through which sense-organs and sense-objects are controlled and all phenomena gathered in the Supreme Embodiment of Samantabhadra and Samantabhadrī. Translated by Vimalamitra and Nyak Jñānakumāra in Phenyul.

14. Tantra of the Supreme Play [of Spiritual Emanation], Revealing the Real Nature of the Secret Nucleus of Vajrasattva, from the Magical Net (rDo rje sems dpa' sgyu 'phrul dra ba las gsang ba'i snying po de kho na nyid bstan pa rol pa chen po'i rgyud), Chs. 13, Derge vol. 10 (THA), ff. 239-279; Tingkye vol. 15, pp. 539-649.

The Tantra of the Supreme Play [of Spiritual Emanation], presents the mental states that are conducive to the practice of the tantras and their connection with the maṇḍala of meditational deities. It examines the pristine cognition symbolised by the hand-held emblems of the deities, and their natural maṇḍala, along with the visualised maṇḍala that is emanated in the yogin's meditative stability, and the ensuing empowerments, commitments, attainments, and enlightened activities that are associated with it. The text concludes with a discussion of the emergence therefrom of the maṇḍala of wrathful deities, as well as their corresponding modes of conduct and secret teachings. Translated by Vimalamitra and Nyak Jñānakumāra.

15. Root Tantra of the Secret Nucleus of Indestructible Reality, which Ascertains the Real (rDo rje gsang ba'i snying po rtsa ba'i rgyud de kho na nyid nges pa), Derge vol. 11 (DA), ff. 60-82 in 22 Chs; Tingkye vol. 16, pp. 1-138 in 33 Chs.

This title refers to different texts in Derge and Tingkye. The former, in twenty-two chapters, corresponds closely to the primary Guhyagarbha Tantra (no. 1 above), while the latter, which is also entitled rGyud kyi rgyal po chen po sgyu 'phrul drva ba, has thirty-three chapters, similar in number, structure, length, and title to those of the Tantra of Supplementary Points (no. 5 above). Translators unknown.

16. Kingly Tantra concerning the Power of the Wrathful Deities, from the Secret Nucleus which Ascertains the Real (gSang ba'i snying po de kho na nyid nges pa'i khro bo stobs kyi rgyud rgyal), Derge vol. 11 (DA), ff. 296-7; Tingkye vol. 16, pp. 138-142.

This fragmentary text, also known as the sTobs kyi dbang phyug sgrub pa dka' ba spyod pa man ngag gi snying po rgyud, concerns the emergence of the maṇḍala of wrathful deities. Translators unknown.

17. Tantra of the Attainment of the Mighty Lords of Yoga through the Power of the Precious Wrathful Deities, from the Magical Net (Khro bo rin po che'i stobs kyi rnal 'byor dbang phyug sgrub pa'i sgyu 'phrul dra ba'i rgyud), Derge, vol. 11 (DA), ff. 294-296; Tingkye, vol. 16, pp. 142-147.

Another short text related to the maṇḍala of wrathful deities. Translated by Vimalamitra and Vairocana.

18. Array of the Nucleus, from the Magical Net, Great King of Tantras (rGyud kyi rgyal po chen po sgyu 'phrul snying po bkod pa), Chs. 8, Tingkye, vol. 16, pp. 147-163.

The Array of the Nucleus initially discusses the mundane world of causes and conditions, followed by the supramundane ground of reality (gzhi) and its natural expressions (rang bzhin), and the quiescent nature of actual reality (chos nyid zhi ba). It then continues with a presentation of the wrathful deities who “subdue conceptual thought”, explaining the metaphor of their “net” of esoteric instructions, as well as rites of wrathful exorcism and the dynamic integration of the continuum of the ground with those of the path and the result. Translators unknown.

19. Tantra of Vairocana, from the Magical Net (rNam snang sgyu 'phrul dra ba), Chs. 10, Tingkye vol. 19, pp. 289-395.

The Tantra of Vairocana, also known as rGyud kyi rgyal po chen po sgyu 'phrul dra ba, emphasises the practice of rituals (cho ga) and feast-offerings (tshogs). It commences with the entrance into the maṇḍala, its secret mantras, meditative stabilities, and the unfolding of pristine cognition. Then, it continues with a description of the offerings associated with the sealing hand-gestures of the deities, and discusses the attainment of pristine cognition through the path of liberation and through the skilful means of sexual practices, concluding with an exposition of burnt offerings (sbyin sregs) and related rituals. Original translators unknown. Later retranslated by Rinchen Zangpo (T. 466).

#### DOXOGRAPHICAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE LONG (A), MEDIUM (B) AND SHORT (C) VERSIONS OF THE GUHYAGARBHA TANTRA

As we can now see, within this corpus of nineteen extant texts pertaining to the cycle of the Magical Net (Māyājāla, sGyur 'phrul dra ba), there are three distinct versions of the Guhyagarbha Tantra, respectively in twenty-two, forty-six and eighty-two chapters. In the table that follows, the chapter

titles of the longest version (A) are compared with those of the middle length version (B) and the concise version (C), which is most widely studied within the tradition. Here I have utilised only the Tingkye edition, where all three texts are conveniently contained in volume 14— Version A in pp. 67-317, Version B in pp. 317-415, and Version C in pp. 1-61. Version C is also cross-paginated with references to the translation contained in this book.

A. sGyu 'phrul brgyad bcu pa, Chs. 82, pp. 67-317

Ch. 1 gleng gzhi'i le'u, pp.67-70: = B, pp. 317-320; C, pp. 2-6 (see pp. 00-00)

Ch. 2 gleng bslang ba'i le'u, pp. 70-73: = B, pp. 320-321

Ch. 3 don dam pa dang kun rdzob kyi byang chub kyi sems ye shes su bskyed pa'i le'u, pp. 73-74: = B, pp. 321-323; C, pp. 6-10 (see pp. 00-00)

Ch. 4 chos thams cad gtan la phab pa'i le'u, pp. 74-78: = B, pp. 323-326; C, pp. 10-13 (see pp. 00-00)

Ch. 5 chos thams cad la chos nyid kyi rgyu yod pa dang rigs rgyud chad pa dang rigs brgyud so so phye ba'i mdo bshad pa'i le'u, pp. 78-80: = B, pp. 326-328

Ch. 6 yi ge'i 'khor lo'i 'phreng ba bkod pa'i le'u, pp. 80-84: = B, pp. 328-331; C, pp. 13-16

Ch.7 gsang ba'i dkyil 'khor kham nyi shu rtsa gcig tu bsdus nas thams cad ma lus par dbyings su bsdus pa'i le'u, pp. 84-87: = B, pp. 331-333

Ch. 8 sgyu 'phrul sgrub pa'i ting nge 'dzin gi le'u, pp. 87-89: = B, pp. 333-335; C, pp. 17-18 (see pp. 00-00)

Ch. 9 shin tu gsang ba'i dkyil 'khor bsdus nas lhag pa'i gzugs brnyan bstan pa'i le'u, pp. 89-90: = B, pp. 335-336

Ch.10 dkyil 'khor spros pa'i le'u, pp. 90-93: = B, pp. 336-338; C, pp. 18-21 (see pp. 00-00)

Ch.11 gzhal yas khang dbub pa'i thabs dra ba'i le'u, pp. 93-95: = B, pp. 338-340

Ch.12 gsang sngags kyi le'u, pp. 95-97: = B, pp. 340-342; C, pp. 21-24 (see pp. 00-00)

Ch.13 dkyil 'khor byin sdus pa'i gsang sngags kyi le'u, pp. 97-98: = B, pp. 340-342; C, pp. 21-24 (see pp. 00-00)

Ch.14 don dam pa dang kun rdzob byang chub sems las phyag rgya gsung gi dkyil 'khor rdzogs pa'i le'u, pp. 98-99

Ch.15 chos thams cad ming gi mtshan nyid de | yum gyi dbyings su bsdus pa'i gsang ba'i le'u, pp. 99-101: = B, pp. 342-344

Ch.16 yan lag thams cad dkyil 'khor du byin gyis brlabs nas phyag rgya spros pa'i le'u, pp. 101-105: = B, pp. 344-346; C, pp. 24-27 (see pp. 00-00).

Ch.17 mtshon cha dam tshig gi phyag rgya klu'i le'u, pp. 105-111

Ch.18 sgyu 'phrul chen po thabs dang shes rab du 'byang ba | phyag mtshan gyi le'u, pp. 111-114: = B, pp. 346-351; C, pp. 27-32 (see pp. 00-00)

Ch.19 rdo rje bkod pa gsang ba dam tshig gi le'u, pp. 114-118: = B, pp. 346-351; C, pp. 27-32 (see pp. 00-00)

Ch.20 lhag pa'i gzugs brnyan kyis dngos grub, pp. 118-121: = B, pp. 351-353

Ch.21 dbang sbyin pa'i le'u, pp. 121-123: = B, pp. 353-355; C, pp. 32-34 (see pp. 00-00)

Ch.22 rdo rje sems dpa' bsgrub pa'i le'u, pp. 123-126: = B, pp. 355-357

Ch.23 tshogs kyi dkyil 'khor gyi le'u, pp. 126-129: = B, pp. 357-359; C, pp. 34-37 (see pp. 00-00)

Ch.24 tshogs bsgrub pa'i le'u, pp. 129-130: = B, pp. 359-360; C, pp. 37-38 (see pp. 00-00)

Ch.25 shin tu gsang ba'i snying po man ngag gi le'u, pp. 130-133: = B, pp. 360-362; C, pp. 38-41 (see pp. 00-00)

Ch.26 gsang ba chen po man ngag gtan la phab pa'i le'u, pp. 133-135

Ch.27 phyogs bcu dus bzhi'i snod bcud bdag la 'dus pa dang | longs spyod sku gsung thugs mi zad pa'i rgyan gyi 'khor lo bskor ba'i le'u, pp. 135-136: = B, pp. 362-364

Ch.28 mnyes pa'i le'u, pp. 136-137: = B, pp. 364-365; C, pp. 41-42 (see pp. 00-00)

Ch.29 khro bo rang bzhin gyi dkyil 'khor gyi sprin rnam par spros pa | bdud brtul ba'i le'u, pp. 137-146: = B, pp. 365-373; C, pp. 42-51 (see pp. 00-00)

Ch.30 khro bo'i tshogs chen po gsung gi dkyil 'khor spros pa'i le'u, pp. 146-148: = B, pp. 373-375; C, pp. 51-52 (see pp. 00-00)

Ch.31 khro bo'i phyag rgya spro ba'i le'u, pp. 148-151: = B, pp. 375-378

Ch.32 khro bo'i dkyil 'khor bstan pa'i le'u, pp. 151-153: = B, pp. 378-379; C, pp. 52-53 (see pp. 00-00)

Ch.33 dgyes pa chen po'i byin brlabs dang yon tan mchog gi ston pa'i le'u, pp. 153-157

Ch.34 'jigs byed chen po bsod nams sbyin pa'i le'u, pp. 157-159.

Ch.35 dgyes pa chen po'i dkyil 'khor dam tshig gi le'u, pp. 159-160

Ch.36 'jigs byed chen po sngags kyi bzlas pa'i snying po 'byung ba zhes bya ba'i le'u, pp. 160-161

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- Ch.40 sman grub pa'i le'u, pp. 168-173: B, pp. 380-385
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- Ch.47 sgyu 'phrul chen po rab tu brgyal bar byed pa | dam tshig bkod pa'i le'u, pp. 190-193
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- Ch.52 mchod sbyin dang dam tshig bstan pa'i le'u, pp. 203-206: = B, pp. 385-387; C, pp. 54-56 (see pp. 00-00)
- Ch.53 dam tshig sum brgya pa rtsa ba bco lnga mdor bshad pa'i le'u, pp. 206-219: = B, pp. 387-388 (see pp. 00-00)
- Ch.54 chos thams cad kyang khro bo dang khro mo'i rang bzhin du gyur pa dang | rang rig pa'i ye shes kyi mes sbyong ba'i le'u, pp. 219-220: = B, pp. 388-389
- Ch.55 homa thams cad ma lus par bstan pa'i le'u, pp. 220-221: = B, pp. 389-390
- Ch.56 shin tu gsang ba'i khro bo nye bar bsgrub pa'i le'u, pp. 221-222: = B, pp. 390-392
- Ch.57 drag po homa gyi le'u, pp. 222-224: = B, pp. 392-393

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Ch.59 rgyal po rgyal mdzad kyi rgyal po'i homa gyi le'u, pp. 226-227: = B, pp. 395-396

Ch.60 thams cad ma lus zhi bar gyur nas zhi ba'i homa gyi le'u, pp. 227-228: = B, pp. 396-398

Ch.61 lhun gyis grub pa'i 'phrin las byin gyis rlob pa zhes bya ba'i le'u, pp. 228-230: = B, pp. 398-400; C, pp. 57-59 (see pp. 00-00)

Ch.62 pha rol du phyin pa bcu dang | sa bcu dang | sa gnyis dang | thabs kyi mchog dang | sangs rgyas kyi zhing ma lus par | yid dang chos su 'dus par bstan pa'i le'u, pp. 230-232: = B, pp. 400-402

Ch.63 de bzhin gshegs pa'i dkyil 'khor nges pa'i don ma lus par mtshan nyid med pa'i phyag rgyar thim pa'i le'u, pp. 232-234: = B, pp. 402-404

Ch.64 tshe'i cho ga dbang dam pa shin tu gsang ba'i le'u, pp. 234-236: = B, pp. 404-406

Ch.65 phra dbab pa'i le'u, pp. 236-239: = B, pp. 406-409

Ch.66 lha chen po bsgrub pa dang | rgyal po chen po bzhi'i dkyil 'khor dgod cing bsgrub pa'i le'u, pp. 239-243: = B, pp. 409-413

Ch.67 sku'i dkyil 'khor mngon du phyung ba zhes bya ba'i le'u, pp. 243-244

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Ch.75 sngon sbyangs bdag med skyes bu yis | chos kyi snying po byang chub mchog mthong ba'i le'u, pp. 297-301

Ch.76 phyag rgya dam tshig gi le'u, pp. 301-303

Ch.77 bzhugs gnas gzhal yas khang bstan pa'i le'u, pp. 303-305

Ch.78 bro gar dang rtse 'jo'i le'u, pp. 305-314

Ch.79 mnyes pa'i le'u, pp. 314-315: B, pp. 413-414; C, pp. 59-60 (see pp. 00-00)

Ch.80 yongs su gzung ba'i le'u, pp. 315-316: B, pp. 414-415; C, pp. 60-61 (see pp. 00-00)

Ch.81 rgyud yongs su gzungs shing gtad pa'i le'u, pp. 316

Ch.82 chos nyid mi 'gyur ba rab tu bstan pa'i le'u, pp. 316-317

The above table shows that of the eighty-two chapters of the long version, the first twenty-eight concern the maṇḍala of peaceful deities and the remainder the maṇḍala of wrathful deities. The intermediate version omits only three of the former (Chs. 14, 17, 26) but thirty-one of the latter (Chs. 33-39, 41-50, 67-78, 81-82) and the short version omits only twelve of the former (Chs. 2, 5, 7, 9, 11, 14-15, 17, 20, 22, 26-27) but forty-six of the latter (Chs. 31, 33-50, 53-60, 62-78, 81-82). It is therefore in the long version that the maṇḍala of wrathful deities reaches its fullest expression, while all three versions differ far less in their presentation of the maṇḍala of peaceful deities. Significantly, it was the short version which was most widely disseminated in Tibet, corroborating Longchen Rabjampa's assertion that the fully elaborate wrathful rites were carefully guarded and not considered advantageous for the majority of practitioners. One could also speculate, on the analogy of teaching-cycles such as the Prajñāpāramitā, whether the shorter versions were abridged from the longer to facilitate mnemonic recitation, or whether the precedence traditionally given to the shortest is valid. However it is difficult at the present time to make reliable assertions regarding the historical status of these versions with respect to each other.

## 5. IMPORTANCE OF THE SHORT VERSION OF THE GUHYAGARBHA TANTRA

Among these texts of varying length, the present study concerns the concise version in twenty-two chapters, which is traditionally considered to be the primary text of the cycle. The full title Guhyagarbhatattvaviniścayamahātantra (Tib. gSang ba'i snying po de kho na nyid nges pa'i rgyud chen po) is here rendered in translation as *The Great Tantra of the Secret Nucleus Definitive With Respect to the Real*. As mentioned above, the text is contained in Derge vol. 9 (ff. 1-31), Tingkye vol. 14, (pp. 1-61), and also in the Kangyur (T. 832). Longchen Rabjampa speaks of it in his *Dispelling the Darkness of the Ten Directions* (Phyogs bcu mun sel) as:

...this kingly and glorious Tantra Of The Secret Nucleus Definitive With Respect to the Real— the furthest summit of all vehicles, the source of all literary transmissions, the great spiritual short-cut among the vehicles [taught] by all buddhas of the three times, and the most secret of all. And Ju Mipham Namgyel in his *Summary of the Guhyagarbha* entitled *Nucleus of Inner Radiance* (sPyi don 'od gsal snying po) elaborates:

It is known from literary sources that "tantras are to be known in comparison with other tantras". Accordingly, this great tantra which completely discloses the essentials of view and meditation according to the unsurpassed mantras is a unique gemstone of the three worlds inasmuch as it qualitatively establishes the enlightened intention and meaning of the entire vehicle of indestructible reality (Vajrayāna). It is the king of all tantras. It is the furthest summit of all vehicles, the source of all teachings, the all-embracing universal commentary on all literary transmissions, the great spiritual short-cut of all buddhas, and it is endowed with the wondrous enlightened attributes of greatness which are the genuine innermost intention of all the tathāgatas. There is therefore no essential point which appears to be taught outside this tantra. Knowing that other texts which have been rashly composed, treating each profound and minute verse (vajrapāda) of the mantra- and tantra-texts as a worthy object of sophistry to satisfy the prowess of the writers' own intellects, are vacuous as a lifeless corpse, it behoves fortunate beings who possess the supreme aspiration of the vehicle of indestructible reality to earnestly attend to the exposition of such [precious] tantras, even at the cost of their own health or of life itself!

The Nyingma tradition therefore regards this text as its flagship tantra, whether it is to be interpreted as mainstream Mahāyoga or as an Atiyoga source.

## MEANING OF THE TITLE

In his commentary, which is fully translated in the present work, Longchen Rabjampa begins with a discussion of the actual title of the Guhyagarbha Tantra and its opening verse of homage. In his expressed view, the essential point of the title should first be grasped, because "those who are

most advanced can understand the content of a text simply by knowing its title". Failing that, a perusal of the table of contents will reveal the significance of the title! In this case, the import of the title suggests that the text will reveal all mundane phenomena, mental and physical, to be naturally present in the pure maṇḍalas of the primordial buddha, Samantabhadra.

From a strict lexical perspective, the Sanskrit compound Guhyagarbha-tattvaviniścaya (gSang ba'i snying po de kho na nyid nges pa) may be translated as Tantra of the Secret Nucleus Definitive with respect to the Real. This implies that the subject matter of the text is secret (gsang ba) because the three buddha-bodies, though present, have been hidden (gab) by suddenly arisen obscurations, so that they are unperceived by mundane beings, and also that the uncommon view, meditation and conduct presented in the text have been concealed (sbas) to prevent confusion and distortion of their meaning. Nucleus (snying po) is a synonym for the abiding nature of primordial buddhahood. That which is real (de kho na nyid) is the very nature of the three buddha-bodies without conjunction or disjunction, and the teaching definitive with respect to it (nges pa) is the truth that abides atemporally as the essence of both cyclic existence (saṃsāra) and nirvāṇa.

The verse of homage with which the text opens is significantly dedicated to the primordial buddha Samantabhadra, who is the buddha-body of reality (dharmakāya) and the actual expositor of this tantra-text.

## 6. THE STRUCTURE OF THE TEXT

The text itself contains twenty-two chapters, structured according to the dynamic of the continuum of the ground, the continuum of the path and the continuum of the result (rgyud gsum), which underlie all tantric literature. However, there are divergent views among commentators within the tradition as to which chapters exactly correspond to which of these three continua. The position adopted by exponents of the distant lineage of the transmitted precepts (ring brgyud bka' ma), including Lochen Dharmaśrī, presents the structural content of the text as follows:

### 1) The Peaceful Maṇḍala:

### 1.1) Continuum of the Ground:

Ch. 1 The Introductory Scene (gleng gzhi'i le'u)

Ch.2 Generation of Ultimate and Relative Enlightened Mind in Pristine Cognition (don dam pa dang kun rdzob kyi byang chub sems ye shes su bskyed pa'i le'u)

Ch.3 The Establishment of All Sacred Teachings (chos thams cad gtan la phab pa'i le'u)

### 1.2) Continuum of the Path

Ch. 4 Cyclical Array of the Garland of Syllables (yi ge 'phreng ba'i 'khor lo bkod pa'i le'u)

Ch.5 Meditative Stability that Attains the Magical Net (sgyu 'phrul dra ba bsgrub pa'i ting nge 'dzin gyi le'u)

Ch. 6 Emergence of the Maṇḍala (dkyil 'khor spros pa'i le'u)

Ch.7 Absorption of the Maṇḍala and the Secret Mantras (dkyil 'khor bsdus ba dang gsang sngags kyi le'u)

Ch. 8 Consecration of All Limbs of the Body as the Maṇḍala and Emergence of the Gestures of Sealing (yan lag thams cad dkyil 'khor du byin gyis brlabs nas phyag rgya spros pa'i le'u)

Ch.9 Secret Commitments of the Indestructible Array (rdo rje bkod pa'i gsang ba'i dam tshig gi le'u)

Ch. 10 Conferral of Empowerments (dbang sbyin pa'i le'u)

Ch.11 Maṇḍala of the Feast-offerings (tshogs kyi dkyil 'khor gyi le'u)

Ch.12 Attainment of the Feast-offerings (tshogs bsgrubs pa'i le'u)

Ch.13 Nucleus of Most Secret Esoteric Instructions (shin tu gsang ba man ngag gi snying po'i le'u)

### 1.3) Continuum of the Result:

Ch. 14 The Pleasing Eulogy (mnyes pa'i bstod pa'i le'u)

### 2) The Wrathful Maṇḍala:

#### 2.1) Continuum of the Ground:

Ch.15 Cloud-like Emergence of the Natural Maṇḍala of Wrathful Deities (khro bo rang bzhin gyi dkyil 'khor gyi sprin rnam par spros pa'i le'u)

#### 2.2) Continuum of the Path

Ch.16 Emergence of the Maṇḍala of Buddha-speech of the Great Assembly of Wrathful Deities (khro bo'i tshogs chen po'i gsung gi dkyil 'khor spros pa'i le'u)

Ch. 17 Revelation of the Maṇḍala of Wrathful Deities (khro bo'i dkyil 'khor bstan pa'i le'u)

Ch.18 Revelation of the Sacred Offerings (mchod sbyin dam pa bstan pa'i le'u)

Ch. 19 Commitments (dam tshig gi le'u)

Ch.20 Consecration of Spontaneous Enlightened Activity (lhun gyis grub pa'i 'phrin las byin gyis rlob pa zhes bya ba'i le'u)

2.3) Continuum of the Result:

Ch.21 Eulogy to the Wrathful Deities (khro bo la bstod pa'i le'u)

However, in his *Dispelling the Darkness of the Ten Directions* (Phyogs bcu mun sel), Longchen Rabjampa presents a somewhat different structure, analysing the chapters in the following manner:

1) Chs. 1-3: The Continuum of the Ground, ie. the natural spontaneous maṇḍala of the ground from which arises the buddhas' compassionate spirituality

2) Chs. 4-21: The Continuum of the Path, ie. the emanation of the peaceful and wrathful deities from the ground

3) Ch. 22: The Continuum of the Result, ie. the methods of teaching and entrusting this tantra-text

In this view, the maṇḍalas of the peaceful and wrathful deities (Chs. 4-21) are to be further subdivided according to the continua of ground, path and result, as follows:

2.1) Chs. 4-14 Maṇḍala of Peaceful Deities:

2.1.1) Continuum of the Ground—

2.1.1.1) maṇḍala of seed-syllables— the emanational basis (Chs. 4-5)

2.1.1.2) maṇḍala of meditative stability— visualisations of buddha-mind, mantras of buddha-speech, and seals of buddha-body (Chs. 6-8)

2.1.1.3) maṇḍala of images— visualisations clarifying the ground (Ch.9)

2.1.1.4) empowerments— introducing the ground (Ch.10)

2.1.2) Continuum of the Path—

2.1.2.1) generation stage of meditation (Chs.11-12)

2.1.2.2) perfection stage of meditation (Ch.13)

2.1.3) Continuum of the Result— a eulogy to buddha-body and pristine cognition (Ch.14)

2.2) Chs. 15-21 Maṇḍala of Wrathful Deities:

2.2.1) Continuum of the Ground—

- 2.2.1.1) maṇḍala of wrathful deities, naturally present (Ch.15)
- 2.2.2) Continuum of the Path—
  - 2.2.2.1) maṇḍala of the mantras of buddha-speech (Ch.16)
  - 2.2.2.2) maṇḍala of images— the visualisations of buddha-mind (Ch.17)
  - 2.2.2.3) maṇḍala of offerings (Ch.18)
  - 2.2.2.4) commitments (Ch.19)
  - 2.2.2.5) enlightened activities (Ch.20)
- 2.2.3) Continuum of the Result— a eulogy to buddha-body and pristine cognition (Ch.21)

Whichever of these two structures is adopted, it is clear that the relationship between the three continua and the various topics of the peaceful and wrathful maṇḍalas subsumed by them reveals a dynamic momentum, extending from the latent potential for buddhahood inherent in all beings to the proclamation of fully manifest buddhahood that is the conclusive result. This should be more fully demonstrated by the following summary of the actual content of the successive twenty-two chapters of the tantra-text which are based on Longchen Rabjampa's own analysis.

## 7. SUMMARY OF THE GUHYAGARBHA TANTRA

### CHAPTER ONE: THE INTRODUCTORY SCENE

The purpose of the first chapter is to present the buddha-body of reality (dharmakāya), manifesting naturally in the Akaniṣṭha Ghanavyūha realm in the form of Samantabhadra, since this is the setting of the introductory scene, on the basis of which the entire tantra-text is expounded. The buddha-body of reality is endowed with five excellent circumstances which are symbolised by the initial stock phrase (v.1) "Thus at the time of this explanation" ('di-skad bshad pa'i dus na), and these are interpreted differently according to the outer tantras, the inner path of skilful means and the secret inner radiance of the Great Perfection.

#### Content

Chapter One demonstrates the excellence of Samantabhadra, the perfect resource of all the buddhas (v.2) which is classified according to the excellent circumstance of its location, its expositors and its audience or

retinue of listeners. The excellent location in which this tantra is revealed is none other than the Akaniṣṭha or Ghanavyūha field associated with all three buddha-bodies (v.3) and within it the celestial palace (v.4) adorned by an excellent array of teaching-thrones (v.5). The excellent expositors of this tantra are endowed with the distinctive marks of buddha-body, and diverse physical postures, hand-implements, and heads (v.6), and include the male and female buddhas of the five enlightened families who embody diverse aspects of pristine cognition, and are the natural purity of the psycho-physical components and elements (vv.7-8). Vajrasattva or Vairocana may be found at the centre of this maṇḍala, depending respectively upon the Mahāyoga and Atiyoga perspectives of our text. The excellent retinue, which is the natural retinue of Samantabhadra, comprises sixteen bodhisattvas who are classified as male and female and as inner and outer (vv.9-12), along with the eight male and female gatekeepers who guard the four directions of the natural maṇḍala (vv.13-14).

The chapter concludes with a synopsis of this naturally manifesting array of pristine cognition or buddha-mind: its source is the indestructible reality of buddhahood (v.15), its disposition of compassionate spirituality is the buddha-body of perfect resource (v.16), its pure manifestation occurs in the meditative stabilities of the buddhas (v.17) and its nature is identified with the five inexhaustible ornaments of buddha-body, -speech, -mind, -attributes and -activities (v.18).

## CHAPTER TWO: GENERATION OF ULTIMATE AND RELATIVE ENLIGHTENED MIND IN PRISTINE COGNITION

The purpose of this chapter is to divulge the enlightened intention of Samantabhadra's pristine cognition, in which all things are ultimately expressed as primordial buddhahood, and relatively expressed as great compassionate spirituality. The former is the genuine intention behind the discourse of this text and the latter is the motivation for its appearance in an externally visible form—the arousal of compassionate energy for the sake of those who have not realised ultimate reality.

### Content

Two aspects of buddhahood are therefore discussed in this chapter: the genuine intention which initiates the discourse and the subsequent arousal of compassionate spirituality for the sake of living beings.

Firstly, the genuine intention is explored through its three successive modalities: Samantabhadra who embodies awareness, buddha-mind itself, through the penetration of Samantabhadrī, reveals his enlightened intention that all the psycho-physical components, sensory bases, activity fields, and elements are integrated in the nature of the five buddha-families and their retinue (vv.1-2). Samantabhadrī who embodies the abiding nature of reality which is the object of buddha-mind, through indivisible union with Samantabhadra, reveals her enlightened intention that all world-systems and their sentient contents and dissonant mental states are inherently empty, abiding in the great sameness of primordial buddhahood (vv.3-4). Their non-dual Supreme Embodiment (bdag nyid chen po), who is Samantabhadra and consort in union (kun bzang yab yum), then reveals the enlightened intention that the reality of buddhahood exists primordially as pristine cognition. Thus, all things are primordially beyond creation, cessation, abiding, objective reference and motion, and the awareness which realises this is identified with pristine cognition or buddha-mind (vv.5-11).

The consequent arousal of compassionate spirituality through which this threefold enlightened intention of Samantabhadra is relatively expressed is then directed in four phases which parallel the four noble truths: for the focus of this spirituality is sentient beings' lack of realisation (v.12-13); the nature of their bewilderment (vv.14-15); the atemporal presence of ultimate truth beyond bondage and liberation (v.16); and the actual diffusion of compassionate energy which removes bewilderment (v.17).

### CHAPTER THREE: THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ALL SACRED TEACHINGS

The purpose of the third chapter is to explore the nature of this compassionate spirituality as it manifests in the world.

#### Introduction

On the basis of the aforementioned diffusion of compassionate spirituality, there are six sages embodying awareness who then emerge from the indestructible body, speech and mind of the tathāgatas in order to teach the six classes of living beings (v.1). In a lengthy overview, the commentator also provides a detailed explanation of this buddha-body of emanation (nirmāṇakāya), according to the common and the uncommon vehicles. The former view, referring specifically to śākyamuni Buddha, concerns his cultivation of enlightened mind, accumulation of provisions and attainment of buddhahood over many successive lives, emphasising his celebrated twelve deeds. The latter interpretation focusses on the emergence of all emanations such as the thousand buddhas and six sages of this "auspicious aeon" from Samantabhadra, the buddha-body of reality.

## Content

The emanational body, represented by these six sages, teaches by means of the following four kinds of instruction (v.2): by the great merits of the buddha-body (v.3), by supernormal cognitive powers of buddha-mind (v.4), by inconceivable miraculous abilities (v.5), and by knowledge conveyed in the five vehicles of buddha-speech, namely, the vehicle of gods and humans, the vehicle of pious attendants, the vehicle of hermit buddhas, the vehicle of bodhisattvas, and the unsurpassed vehicle of secret mantra (vv. 6-8).

The text then analyses the nature of the living beings who are to be trained by these instructions, and the nature of the sacred teachings through which they are trained. Firstly, the nature of cyclic existence (saṃsāra) is ultimately established to be the pure reality itself. Although it diversely arises on the basis of fundamental ignorance, the underlying reality of buddhahood is present from the moment of its initial appearance as ignorance. The bewildering appearances of cyclic existence are a miraculous display of mind, baseless in nature, and thought itself is actually a display of pristine cognition (vv.9-14).

Secondly, the sacred teachings through which beings are trained and through which this apparent bewilderment is removed are, in the final analysis, established to be inexpressible in nature because they refer directly to the unsurpassed result beyond the exoteric teachings of the

causal vehicles. Here, all the teachings are regarded as a miraculous display without inherent or independent existence; and, despite their unchanging basis, they exhibit great flexibility in content and great diversity in their teachers or expositors. In particular, this Guhyagarbha Tantra is revered as the emanational basis of all the vehicles that lead to buddhahood and as the all-embracing, universal interpretation of the sūtras and tantras. Although all teachings and all things that can be known are conventionally assigned names and labels, essentially they too are without inherent existence (vv.15-20).

The chapter concludes with a synopsis which describes the bewildering appearances of cyclic existence and the buddhafi elds of nirvāṇa as natural manifestations of mind and pristine cognition respectively (vv.21-23).

This article is the third of a six part series which brings you Gyurme Dorje's extensive and remarkable introduction to the Guhyagarbha Tantra, the flagship tantra of the Nyingma School of the Tibetan Buddhism.

#### CHAPTER FOUR: CYCLICAL ARRAY OF THE GARLAND OF SYLLABLES

The purpose of this and the following chapter is to show how the compassionate spirituality of the buddha-body of emanation manifests externally, out of emptiness, in form of the seed-syllables, the significance being that it is from these vibrant seed-syllables that the fully manifest visualisations of buddha-mind, mantra sounds of buddha-speech and sealing hand-emblems indicative of buddha-body all subsequently emerge.

##### Introduction

Through the enlightened intention of all the tathāgatas, a cyclical garland of seed-syllables emerges from the indestructible buddha-body, -speech and -mind in order to reveal the sameness and great perfection of actual reality (v.1).

The commentator, Longchen Rabjampa, at this point elucidates the general significance of the garland of syllables. The Sanskrit akṣara (syllable) is defined as the "unchanging essence" or the "true nature of mind", which

sustains the buddha-body, -speech and -mind within the energy channels of the subtle body. The basic Sanskrit syllables comprise sixteen vowels and thirty-four consonants. However in the context of the present maṇḍala, one hundred and three seed-syllables are enumerated, namely those of the forty-two peaceful deities which are located in the heart, those of the fifty-eight wrathful deities which are located in the skull, and the seed-syllables Oṃ, Āḥ, HŪṃ, which are respectively located in the crown, throat and heart centres and which have the function of purifying the six mundane seed-syllables that generate birth among the six classes of living beings. All one hundred and three seed-syllables of this garland emanate from the uncreated syllable A and emerge as a cloud-mass from which the maṇḍala is visually generated. Yet they abide naturally within all sentient beings.

Apart from their natural occurrence within the subtle physical body, these seed-syllables are also associated with the diverse meditational deities of the maṇḍala, visualised within their celestial palaces, because it is from these seed-syllables that the fully manifest forms of the deities emerge during the generation and perfection stages of meditation. Then, from another perspective, the seed-syllables are considered to be miraculous emanations in the maṇḍalas of the buddha-body of perfect resource (sambhogakāya), purposefully acting on behalf of sentient beings, and also phonic syllables that are intoned in the course of mantra recitation, which purposefully effects the spiritual accomplishment of the secret mantras.

## Content

The cyclical garland of syllables is presented initially as an object of meditation from the standpoint of both the generation and perfection stages, as well as from that of the ensuing four rites of enlightened activity. All spiritual accomplishments are said to derive from this cyclical garland of syllables because they are the causal basis of the pristine cognition of buddha-mind (vv.2-3). At this point, the actual emanation of the garland of syllables occurs, beginning with the syllable A, and it visibly resonates throughout the world-systems of living beings (vv.4-5).

The tathāgatas then expound the inner meaning of the syllables, referring to the uncreated syllable A on the level of the buddha-body of reality, to the forty-two syllables which emerge in conjunction with it on the level of

the buddha-body of perfect resource, and to the words and letters which they form on the level of the buddha-body of emanation (vv.6-10). The maṇḍalas of buddha-body, -speech and -mind are all gathered in the forty-five syllables, ie. the forty-two seed-syllables of the peaceful deities combined with their three punctuation marks (v.11). The true nature of mind is successively identified with the uncreated syllable A, with the spontaneously present forty-two syllables and with their symbolic written forms in which there is no duality of appearance and emptiness, corresponding respectively to the three buddha-bodies (vv.12-14)

Then there follows a detailed analysis of each seed-syllable in turn, preceded by the three punctuation symbols which demarcate the seed-syllables (v.15). The forty-two seed-syllables in this context actually become manifest in the following sequence: That of Samantabhadrī (v.16), those of the five male buddhas beginning with Vairocana (v.17), those of the five female buddhas beginning with Ākāśadhātviśvarī (v.18), those of the inner male bodhisattvas, beginning with Kṣitigarbha and ending with the gatekeeper Yamāntaka (v.19), those of the inner female bodhisattvas beginning with Lāsyā and ending with the gatekeeper Mahābala (v.20), those of the outer male bodhisattvas beginning with Maitreya and ending with the gatekeeper Hayagrīva (v.21), those of the outer female bodhisattvas and female gatekeepers beginning with Dhūpā (v.22), those of Samantabhadra and the six sages (v.23), and finally those of Amōtakunḍalin and the glow of the wrathful deities (v.24). However, it is emphasised that this cyclical mass of syllables abides primordially as the essence of buddha-body and pristine cognition (v.25).

Finally, there is a summary which interprets the emergence of the wheel of syllables as an expression of the buddhas' emanational nature, as a presence within the subtle physical body, where they are the causal basis for the attainment of buddhahood, and as objects of meditation according to the paths of liberation and skilful means (vv.26-27).

## CHAPTER FIVE: MEDITATIVE STABILITY THAT ATTAINS THE MAGICAL NET

The purpose of this chapter is to disclose how spiritual attainments emerge from the cyclical garland of syllables.

## Introduction

At this juncture, the maṇḍala of meditational deities inherent in the seed-syllables is described as a magical emanation (sgyu 'phrul), in which skilful means and discriminative awareness are without duality, and the sequence of meditative attainments corresponding to this cloud-mass of syllables is then presented (v.1).

## Content

Spiritual accomplishments are to be attained in the following sequence: The true nature of mind is revealed as the basis of spiritual accomplishment (v.2); the supreme accomplishment of buddhahood is perfectly present in all maṇḍalas because they unite the maṇḍala of magical emanation (sgyu 'phrul) or seed-syllables in the maṇḍala of the net (drva ba) or discriminative awareness (v.3); the ordinary spiritual attainments are associated with the four rites of enlightened activity (v.4); the attainment known as the consummation of the five elements then ensues (v.5); along with the eight lesser rituals, including exorcism and attraction (v.6). All these meditative attainments are said to emerge in the manner of light from darkness, like the alchemical transmutation of iron into gold, or like the cure of an efficacious medication (v.7).

Now, there are five prerequisites for yogins seeking this spiritual attainment that accords with the cloud-mass of syllables: They are required to make offerings to their spiritual teacher, to clearly realise the meditations pertaining to the deities and their seed-syllables, to undertake the corresponding commitments, to recite the corresponding mantras correctly, and to securely seal the practice by enacting the corresponding hand-gestures (v.8). Thereby the essence of spiritual accomplishment will be attained (v.9).

As far as the actual meditative stability or skilful means which brings about such attainments is concerned: initially there is the meditative stability in the cyclical garland of seed-syllables (v.10). This entails meditation on discriminative awareness which cultivates the non-referential ultimate truth and non-dual pristine cognition associated with the buddha-body of

reality (vv.11-12) and meditation on skilful means which cultivates the generation and perfection stages associated with the buddha-body of form, securely sealing the display of pristine cognition in the seal of primordial buddhahood (v.13). By way of a synopsis, the text emphasises that supreme accomplishment, the nature of Samantabhadra, is attained through these meditative stabilities and through their ancillary applications of mantra recitation and sealing hand-gestures (v.14).

## CHAPTER SIX: EMERGENCE OF THE MAṆḌALA

The purpose of this and the following two chapters is to project the maṇḍala of buddha-mind that is visualised through meditative stability as emerging from the cyclical garland of seed-syllables, along with its aspects— the maṇḍalas of buddha-speech and buddha-body, which are symbolised respectively by mantra recitation and sealing hand-gestures.

### Introduction

The focus here is on the emergence of the maṇḍala of meditational deities who are to be visualised by means of meditative stability that accords with the volition of the tathāgatas (v.1).

The commentator, Longchen Rabjampa, at this point includes an extensive overview concerning the term maṇḍala. The Sanskrit maṇḍala is generally defined as a central deity encircled by a retinue, but more specifically classified according to the maṇḍalas of the ground, path and result. The maṇḍala of the ground is the atemporal presence of the mundane world and its inhabitants as primordial buddhahood. The maṇḍala of the path includes those symbolic maṇḍalas which are drawn on cotton, or with coloured powders, or laid out schematically with focal points and flower-clusters prominent. Yet it also refers to the maṇḍalas of genuine buddha-body, -speech and -mind which are to be attained through meditative stability, as well as those of the supporting celestial palace, the meditational deities supported within it, and their non-dual pristine cognition. The maṇḍala of the result comprises the effortless, spontaneous presence of the five maṇḍalas of buddha-body, -speech, -mind, -attributes and -activities.

### Content

The maṇḍalas of ground, path and result all emanate from the cyclical garland of seed-syllables. Among them, the natural and spontaneous maṇḍala of the ground is that in which the elements, psycho-physical components and dissonant mental states of unenlightened beings are primordially present as the female buddhas, the male buddhas and the pristine cognitions respectively (v.2).

The maṇḍala of the path which is the focus of the yogin's meditative stability comprises the actual maṇḍala with its celestial palace (v.3), ornaments (v.4), teaching-thrones (v.5), and meditational deities (vv.6-7), along with their symbolic hand-held implements (v.8), body-colours (v.9), and general appearance (v.10), as well as the efulgence of light rays that they emit (v.11). Yet it also refers to the fruitional result that is achieved through this attainment, namely, the resultant buddha-body of form (rūpakāya) which arises from the body of reality (v.12) and the consequent illusion-like enlightened activity (v.13) which it performs on behalf of ordinary beings, pious attendants, hermit buddhas, and bodhisattvas (vv.14-17). Consequently, living beings are liberated, either through the causal paths which gradually refine obscurations (v.18), or through the resultant paths and levels associated with the indivisibility and spontaneity of the five buddha-bodies (vv.19-22). In this way, the maṇḍala of the path radiantly emanates throughout all world-systems (v.23).

The maṇḍala of the result is then described as the non-dual pristine cognition without objective or subjective referent, which emerges fully manifest and radiant in the context of this maṇḍala of meditative stability (vv. 24-25). The final verse may also be interpreted from the standpoints of ground, path or result individually.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: ABSORPTION OF THE MAṆḌALA AND THE SECRET MANTRAS

The purpose of this chapter is to present the maṇḍala of the secret mantras of buddha-speech, which is an aspect of the aforementioned maṇḍala of meditative stability. Once the visualised maṇḍala has been emanated through meditative stability, the secret mantras then emerge from the

indestructible buddha-body, -speech and -mind of all the tathāgatas in order to disclose the maṇḍala of buddha-speech (v.1).

## Content

First, there is a description of the actual syllables and words forming the secret mantras of the forty-two peaceful deities in the order in which they emerge, followed by the mantras that confer empowerment and blessing.

The actual mantras are enunciated in the following sequence: Those which visually generate the maṇḍala palace (v.2) and the meditational deities within it (vv.3-8), followed by those which invite and absorb the genuine deities into the visualisation (v.9), and make offerings to them (v.10). A prayer for spiritual accomplishment ensues (v.11). Consequently, the mantra syllables resonate throughout the world-systems (v.12).

Next, there are the mantras which confer empowerment through the five pristine cognitions and the five enlightened families (vv.13-15). These, in turn, give rise to a blessing which dissolves indivisibly with the mundane body, speech and mind of trainee practitioners, transforming the mundane world and its inhabitants into the maṇḍala of deities (v.16).

More generally, the inner significance of buddha-speech is then clarified and established through an exposition of its inexpressible essence (v.17), its inconceivability (v.18), its originally pure abiding nature (v.19), its apparitional nature (v.20), and its non-deviation from the expanse of actual reality despite its diverse manifestations as the teachings of the nine vehicles (v.21). In fact, the indestructible buddha-speech discernibly manifests through its disposition of compassionate spirituality for the sake of living beings (v.22), but there is a paradox: it remains essentially unspoken while being ostensibly spoken (v.23).

## CHAPTER EIGHT: CONSECRATION OF ALL LIMBS OF THE BODY AS THE MAṆḌALA AND EMERGENCE OF THE GESTURES OF SEALING

The purpose of this chapter is to disclose the maṇḍala of the hand-gestures of sealing and their symbolic hand-held emblems, which are indicative of buddha-body. This, like the previous chapter, is considered to be an aspect

of the aforementioned maṇḍala of meditative stability. At the outset then, the tathāgatas, having divulged the maṇḍala of secret mantras and its blessings, consecrate the limbs of the body as a maṇḍala of meditational deities (v.1).

## Content

The maṇḍala of sealing hand-gestures comprises those of the ground, path and result. The first indicates that all phenomena, manifestly perfect in the Magical Net (sgyu 'phrul drva ba), are sealed primordially and spontaneously by Samantabhadra, in the seal of supreme enlightenment (v.2).

The sealing hand-gestures of the path are then said to emerge in three successive phases: Firstly, the causal basis for their emergence is the hand-gesture known as "the indestructible palms" (rdo rje thal mo), according to which the seed-syllables of the male and female buddhas located respectively on the finger-tips of the right and left hands are joined together, giving rise to the sealing hand-emblems of the various deities (v.3). Secondly, the all-embracing hand-gesture (spyi'i phyag rgya) is executed by joining the index finger of the right hand with the middle finger of the left hand, and the remaining fingers are also joined together in pairs, indicating that the central male and female deities of the maṇḍala are united, along with their surrounding deities, and giving rise to the supreme bliss of spiritual accomplishment (v.4). Thirdly, the various hand-held emblems (phyag mtshan) indicative of the diverse deities of the maṇḍala then become manifest from their respective seed-syllables through the hand-gesture of the "indestructible fist" (rdo rje khu tshur, vv. 5-19). The sealing hand-gestures of the result refer to the natural seal, which is the true nature of mind, the abiding nature of reality (v.20), and to those seals associated with provisional and conclusive results. In the course of meditative experience and feast-offering ceremonies there are provisional hand-gestures of sealing which are made, whereby the limbs of the central deity are emanated as the forty-two peaceful deities (v.21), and subsequently as the thousand buddhas (v.22), twenty-one thousand buddhas (v.23) and even inconceivable buddhas (v.24). By contrast, the conclusive seal of buddha-body securely acts on behalf of living beings through its diverse manifestations (v.25) and the diverse teachings of the

nine vehicles (v.26). Though unified in the nature of the body of pristine cognition (v.27), the conclusive seal assumes indefinite appearances for the sake of trainee practitioners (v.28) and it gathers within the abiding nature of reality all physical movements (v.29).

## CHAPTER NINE: SECRET COMMITMENTS OF THE INDESTRUCTIBLE ARRAY

The purpose of this chapter is to show how the aforementioned maṇḍala of meditative stability and its aspects of mantra recitation and sealing hand-gestures are made manifest by means of the symbolic maṇḍala of images, enabling empowerments to be conferred.

### Introduction

Having revealed the maṇḍala of meditative stability and its aspects, the Great Joyous One (dgyes pa chen po) who is the Supreme Embodiment of Samantabhadra and Samantabhadrī combined then becomes equipoised in the meditation of "the sequence of empowerments which accord with the various maṇḍalas of images", and reveals the following teaching in order to manifest the aforementioned maṇḍalas for the sake of trainee practitioners (v.1).

Longchen Rabjampa includes a very extensive overview at this juncture, concerning the construction of symbolic maṇḍalas and the conferral of empowerment through them. The discussion refers to the intricate stages of maṇḍala construction, the generation of the deities within the symbolic maṇḍala through meditative stability, and the offerings and mantra recitations which are then to be made. Empowerments are subsequently conferred as follows: After burnt offerings have been performed as a preliminary purification, the student enters the maṇḍala and receives empowerment, thereby undertaking to meditate through the generation and perfection stages until the result known as the rank of the four kinds of awareness-holder (vidyādhara) is achieved.

### Content

This chapter presents the natural maṇḍala of the body of the female and male consorts— in which those of highest potential are empowered, and the symbolic maṇḍala constructed of coloured powders in which those of lower potential are empowered.

As far as the maṇḍala of the female consort is concerned, its location is revealed to be the secret or sexual centre of the female consort (v.2) and this is considered in terms of its dimensions (v.3), the pitching of the maṇḍala lines which purify her mental continuum (v.4), and the celestial palace and symbolic seal which are visualised to be drawn within this maṇḍala (vv.5-6). Offerings are prepared, especially those associated with the female deities of the maṇḍala which generate bliss (v.7). Burnt offerings are made as a preliminary purification (vv.8-9), followed by the relative and ultimate offerings of meditative stability (vv.10-12), and the secret offerings of skilful means and discriminative awareness which generate supreme bliss. Thereby, all the buddhas and sentient beings are provisionally delighted by the display of inner radiance free from conceptual elaboration, and buddhahood is conclusively attained (vv.13-16).

Once the master who confers empowerment has entered the maṇḍala (v.17), the student is urged to enter and receive empowerment with an attitude of total renunciation which purifies broken commitments (vv.18-19). The actual empowerments are then conferred in the following order: the ten empowerments of beneficence (phan pa'i dbang bcu), followed by the five empowerments of ability (nus pa'i dbang lnga), while the three higher empowerments of profundity (zab dbang gsum) are implicit in the disclosure of this very maṇḍala (v.20).

There is also, however, another tradition according to which the higher empowerments are received in the maṇḍala of the secret or sexual centre of the male consort (v. 21).

The symbolic maṇḍala of colour powders, in which those of lower potential are empowered, is materially constructed on a small, intermediate or large scale (vv.22-24). It is actually consecrated through the generation of the visualised form of the meditational deity, known as the Being of Commitment (samayasattva), after which an invitation is made to the actual meditational deity, known as the Being of Pristine Cognition

(jñānasattva) to enter, and these two are then absorbed without duality (vv.25-27). Consequently, provisional accomplishments such as the four rites of enlightened activity and the complete array of supreme accomplishments associated with buddha-body, -speech and -mind are attained in order that all beings may benefit (vv.28-30).

Having received empowerment, the trainee will swiftly become accomplished by persevering through skilful means in the five aspects of meditative stability, the five prerequisites for meditation practice and the five aspects of attainment advocated by the mantra-texts (vv.30-31). In these ways he or she will then achieve the provisional results as an awareness-holder (v.32) and the conclusive result of buddhahood (vv.33-36).

The chapter ends with a brief synopsis concerning the nature of the faith or devotion required if those on whom empowerments are conferred are to become accomplished. Conversely, if empowerments are conferred on those lacking faith or those who are degenerate in their commitments, the outcome will be negative (v.37).

## CHAPTER TEN: CONFERRAL OF EMPOWERMENTS

The purpose of this chapter is to disclose the actual empowerments that are conferred in respect of the aforementioned maṇḍalas. Having revealed all the maṇḍalas in which empowerment is to be conferred, Samantabhadra, the Great Joyous One, then enters the meditative stability called "the conferral of the king" in order to express the actual empowerments (v.1).

### Content

The three empowerments of profundity, namely, those of secrecy (gsang dbang), discriminating pristine cognition (shes rab yes shes kyi dbang) and word and meaning (tshig don gyi dbang), are conferred on the basis of the maṇḍala of the female consort. At the outset, the appropriate visualisations should be made, the master and student should enter into the maṇḍala, the lower empowerments should be successfully conferred, and the female consort should be consecrated in the appropriate manner (v.2).

The lower empowerments which are the first to be conferred comprise those of ability and beneficence. The five inner empowerments of ability are those of the listener, the meditator, enlightened activity, the expositor, and the king of indestructible reality, which are respectively associated with Ratnasambhava, the Central Deity (ie. Vairocana/ Akṣobhya), Amoghasiddhi, Amitābha, and all five enlightened families together (vv.3-7). Without receiving these, no progression through the secret mantras is possible (v.8).

The ten outer empowerments of beneficence are those of the crown-ornament, the diadem, the rosary, the armour, the victory banner, the seals, the parasol, the vase, food and drink, and the five nectars. These are said to confer excellence, to remove obstacles and to reveal the indivisibility of cyclic existence and nirvāṇa (v. 9).

In brief, those who have received all the empowerments possess the means to achieve swiftly the provisional and conclusive results (v.10).

## CHAPTER ELEVEN: MAṆḌALA OF THE FEAST OFFERINGS

The purpose of this and the following two chapters is to present the paths through which the aforementioned maṇḍalas of the ground are to be attained. In particular, chapters eleven and twelve concern the generation stage of meditation (utpattikrama) which reverses common attachments, while chapter thirteen reveals the perfection stage (sampannakrama) in which the essential meaning of the practice is penetrated.

### Introduction

Having conferred empowerment in the maṇḍala of the ground, Samantabhadra, the Great Joyous One, then enters the meditative stability called "the king or transformation of the Magical Net", which is the coalescence of skilful means and discriminative awareness, in order to reveal the generation stage of skilful means.

### Content

As a preparation, there are four axioms of correct view which clarify the maṇḍala of the spontaneous ground which is to be realised through the generation stage. These are known as single basis, modality of seed-syllables, blessing and direct perception, and they respectively concern the primordial emptiness that gives rise to cyclic existence and nirvāṇa, the indivisibility of appearances and emptiness, the innate purity of all things in the primordial maṇḍala, and the realisation that all phenomena are the deities of the maṇḍala (v.2).

The actual experiential cultivation of the path has two aspects, namely, the discernment that all appearances are pristine cognition and the display of the maṇḍala of feast offerings.

According to the former, all subjective psycho-physical components are discerned as the maṇḍalas of peaceful and wrathful male deities (v.3), all objective elements are discerned as the maṇḍalas of the female consorts of the peaceful and wrathful deities (v.4), and all their offerings, ornaments and so forth are discerned as the maṇḍala of the indivisible display of the male and female deities (v.5). In particular, the indivisibility and natural purity of the paths of skilful means and "liberation", which employ the secret offerings, are discerned as follows:

The path of skilful means (thabs lam) concerns the maṇḍala of great bliss in which sexual union is naturally pure. In general, there are three kinds of mudrā or female yogic partner—the devī aged twelve, the nāginī aged sixteen and those of inferior genus aged twenty, who are respectively the consorts of buddha-mind, buddha-speech and buddha-body (v.6). In particular there are six types of female yogic partner, known as the lotus, conch, marked, doe, elephant and diverse types, each of which is associated with one of the six different enlightened families and classified according to superior, mediocre and inferior characteristics or signs. The signs are said to be clearest in girls under the age of twenty.

As for the development of pristine cognition in this path of skilful means, there are the preliminary practices, namely: ritual service (bsnyen pa) which induces bliss by means of relaxation, dietetics and medicinal elixirs (rasāyana), massage (bskum nye), conversation and so forth; rites of attainment (sgrub pa) which require the male and female yogins to be

visualised as the male and female consorts and to engage in foreplay; and rites of great attainment (sgrub chen) which require the union of the male and female consorts (v.7). The actual foundation or main practice then concerns the four delights (dga' ba bzhi) which are experienced through the descent of seminal energy through the central channel of the subtle body (v.8), and the pristine cognition experienced through the subsequent re-ascending of this seminal energy (v.9). The result of the practice of the path of skilful means includes supreme accomplishments such as the level of Samantabhadra and the buddha-body of indestructible reality, and common accomplishments which are endowed with supernormal cognitive powers (v. 10).

The path of "liberation" (sgrol lam) which forcibly transfers the consciousness of negative beings to a higher realm of rebirth in order to compassionately thwart their negative intent is also discerned to be naturally pure. There are ten objects or "fields of compassion" suitable for the application of such "liberating" techniques, including those who are hostile to the Three Precious Jewels (triratna) and spiritual teachers, those who misinterpret the commitments and those trapped in evil existences (v.11). The actual skilful means which effect this "liberation" are meditative stability, mantra recitation combined with hand-gestures of sealing, and the burnt offering of an effigy, which are respectively for yogins of superior, mediocre and inferior potential (v.12). The benefit of this practice is that beings destined for rebirth in lower realms are "liberated" and transferred to higher realms (v.13).

The paths of skilful means and "liberation" are discerned to be naturally pure because in each case, the maṇḍala of magical pristine cognition is untainted by the defects associated with past actions (karma) (v.14).

Secondly, the experiential cultivation of the generation stage of meditation sets the aforementioned refinements of pure view within the context of the feast offering ceremony. The Sanskrit term gaṇacakra is defined as "a feast or assembly of the extraordinary supports, persons and implements associated with the deliberate practice of the secret mantras". Now, the yogin who discerns through the axioms of the three purities and four samenesses that all phenomena comprising the mundane world and its inhabitants are the feast-offering of Samantabhadra, primordial

buddhahood itself, will swiftly attain supreme spiritual accomplishment (v.15-16).

The diverse modes of the feast-offerings which emerge from the feast-offering of Samantabhadra are classified according to the number of participants or the kinds of maṇḍala they form. Those of the peaceful deities may form five, three or a single pair of male and female yogins, while those of the wrathful deities may form their own distinctive clusters. Altogether, there may be a hundred or even a multitude of participating yogins and yoginīs (vv.17-20).

Feast-offerings may also be classified according to the diverse outer, inner and secret hand-implements which the participants hold, the diverse deities who confer accomplishments in the course of the ceremonies, and the provisions of merit and pristine cognition that are gathered within them.

As far as the actual procedures for the performance of the feast offerings associated with the peaceful and wrathful deities are concerned: The participants should enter the assembly according to the correct ritual sequence. This means that the maṇḍala of the single cluster is entered first of all (vv.21-22), followed by the maṇḍala of three clusters (v.23), then the maṇḍala of five clusters (v.24) and then the maṇḍala of indestructible expanse (v.25). On the basis of the symbolic maṇḍala which is constructed in accordance with these clusters, suitable offerings and implements are arrayed and transformed through meditative stability before being offered to the visualised deities and enjoyed by them. The ceremony concludes with the prayers and benedictions which dedicate the merit of the practice for the sake of all beings.

The chapter ends with a synopsis of the basic elements necessary for attainment through the feast-offerings, namely meditative stability (v.26), the appropriate location and implements (v.27), and the specific time for its performance (v.28).

## CHAPTER TWELVE: ATTAINMENT OF THE FEAST OFFERINGS

The purpose of this chapter is to disclose the particular aspects of the maṇḍala of feast-offerings, namely, the meditative stabilities associated with the visualised deities and offerings, and the attainments of the awareness-holders which ensue.

## Introduction

Having explained the maṇḍala of feast-offerings, Samantabhadra, the Great Joyous One, then enters the meditative stability of "the array of ornaments", which are enjoyed by buddhas and sentient beings and are laid out within the maṇḍala of feast-offerings (v.1).

## Content

This chapter begins with a general discussion of the meditative stabilities connected with the feast-offerings and their beneficial attributes: Spiritual accomplishments are achieved through the various meditative stabilities which perceive all things as the Magical Net (v.2). These include: the meditative stability focussing on the meditational deities' dance-steps and hand-gestures, which confer the benefit of unimpeded motion (v.3), the meditative stability focussing on the seals of their songs, which confer the benefit of unimpeded sound (v.4), the meditative stability focussing on the seals of their ornaments and raiment, which confer the benefit of protection, along with the major and minor physical marks of the buddha-body (v.5), the meditative stability focussing on their food and drink which confers the benefit of buddha-body and the nectar of buddha-speech (v.6), and the meditative stability focussing on the seals of sexual yoga and forceful "liberation", which confer all accomplishments and enlightened activities (v.7).

By retaining the correct view concerning the coalescence of appearance and emptiness, and practising the generation and perfection stages of meditation, the yogin will gradually attain the mature status of an awareness-holder and then be confirmed on the buddha-level (vv.8-9). Thus, the results achieved through the performance of the feast-offerings and their meditative stabilities are known as the attainment of the four classes of awareness-holder, which are to be differentiated in terms of their emanational birth, and their association with provisional results and levels,

including the ten transcendent perfections (vv.10-11), and with the conclusive attainment of the buddha-levels (v.12).

The chapter ends with a synopsis describing the all-embracing maṇḍala which supports the feast-offerings: By visualising and meditating on Samantabhadra and Samantabhadrī in union, which is the true nature of mind, the yogin comes to meditate on all maṇḍalas (vv.13-14), and thereby attain the accomplishment of all maṇḍalas (v.15). Understanding all things to be the true nature of mind, there will be no defect with respect to the result, whatever the yogin's degree of proficiency in the generation stage (v.16).

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN: NUCLEUS OF MOST SECRET ESOTERIC INSTRUCTIONS

This chapter expounds the perfection stage of the path, including the Great Perfection of inner radiance, which is the culmination of experiential cultivation, bringing about the result of perfect buddhahood.

### Introduction

Having revealed the generation stage of the path of meditation, Samantabhadra, the Great Joyous One, then enters the meditative stability which is "the cloud-like array of the nucleus of most secret commitment", in order to reveal the perfection stage. Accordingly, all things are revealed to be spontaneously present in the primordial Great Perfection (v.1).

### Content

There are two aspects to the exposition of the perfection stage— the first concerning the manner in which the secret truth abides in the mind of the spiritual master of the tantras (vajrācārya), and the second concerning the natural Great Perfection itself. Now, this secret truth abides in the minds of the diverse spiritual teachers (v.2), whose teaching may partake of diverse views, encompassing those non-Buddhists whose views are held to harbour no understanding and wrong understanding, as well as the adherents of the Hīnayāna who have partial understanding, the followers of the Mahāyāna causal vehicles whose understanding approaches completion,

and the adepts of Kriyā, Caryā, Yoga and Mahāyoga tantra who maintain distinct understandings. However all these teachings culminate in the natural secret truth which is the Magical Net. In brief, this secret truth is fully present in the syllables and sounds of the Guhyagarbha Tantra itself (v.3), and its concealed and hidden meanings are revealed by the vajrācārya (v.4).

The exposition of the three aspects of the natural Great Perfection which follows is given in the form of a brief outline and then as an extensive exegesis. The former comprises: the generation stage of skilful means (v.5), the perfection stage of discriminative awareness (v.6), and the stage of inner radiance which is without duality (v.7).

As for the latter, the extensive exegesis of these three stages: The outer generation stage is that in which all phenomena, psycho-physical components and so forth are visualised as the maṇḍala of meditational deities (v.8). The inner perfection stage concerns the meditations on bliss and emptiness, along with their result (vv.9-10); while the secret stage of inner radiance concerns the Great Perfection and entails the recognition of inner radiance as the ground (v.11), the recognition of the appearance of pristine cognition in meditative stability as the path (v.12), and recognition of the supreme spiritual accomplishment of buddhahood as the result (v.13).

The commentator, having already expounded the outer generation stage, at this juncture provides extensive overviews concerning the inner perfection stage and the secret stage of inner radiance, which is the Great Perfection. The former includes both the path of skilful means and the path of liberation.

In the context of this perfection stage, the path of skilful means comprises the control of vital energy with respect to the yogin's subtle body and also when in union with a yogic partner. In the first case, the yogin utilises the four energy centres, the seventy-two thousand energy channels and twenty-one thousand six hundred vital energies within the subtle body. The purpose of this training is to transform the coarse vital energy associated with past actions into vital energy of pristine cognition, within the central channel, where it transforms the energy centres into globes of

light and thence into the meditational deities of the enlightened families. This practice brings about provisional results such as the supernormal cognitive powers and the conclusive result of the buddha-level.

The purpose of the second kind of training which refines the movement of seminal energy when the yogin is in union with a yogic partner, is to transform dissonant mental states into the path of purification. There are four kinds of delight experienced by the yogin during this practice, and these are differentiated through the degrees to which conceptions are renounced and bliss is present, as well as by their locations within the subtle body. This generation of bliss is activated by the downward movement of seminal energy, which gives rise to the perfection of the causal paths and levels, along with the transcendent perfections, while the upward movement of seminal fluids in reverse gives rise to the resultant paths and levels, along with the six supernormal cognitive powers and the major and minor marks of the buddha-body. This practice results in the attainment of both supreme and common spiritual accomplishments.

In addition, there are subsidiary instructions concerning the generation of inner heat (gtum mo), which assists the practitioner on the path of skilful means. During the meditation on the caṇḍāli energy channel which connects with the heart centre of the subtle body, the syllable A, located below the navel centre, is visualised as if blazing on fire, in consequence of which it melts the syllable HAṃ located in the crown centre, thereby generating an inner heat within the body. This warmth gives rise to the pristine cognition of bliss and emptiness, which acts as an aid to the two aforementioned kinds of training.

The path of liberation includes meditative stability on the apparitional meditational deities which transforms all conceptualisation into the maṇḍala, and meditative stability on emptiness or actual reality which integrates the practices of tranquility (zhi gnas) and higher insight (lhag mthong) during periods of meditation and post-meditation. As a result, both provisional and conclusive enlightened attributes are accomplished.

The secret inner radiance of the Great Perfection is then considered in three phases: Firstly, the inner radiance of the maṇḍala of the ground is present within the heart and crown centres of the subtle body in form of the

clusters of peaceful and wrathful deities respectively, and yet these are concealed in the form of glowing seeds or seminal points which only become fully manifested through the generation and perfection stage practices when attained by the four kinds of awareness-holder.

Secondly, when pristine cognition is recognised as the path through the yogin's experiential cultivation, this refers to darkness meditation during which the yogin assumes the so-called seven postures of Vairocana and experiences the various signs of inner radiance, and to daylight meditation during which he or she is absorbed in a non-referential meditative equipoise. The fusion of these two coalesces tranquility and higher insight, and brings about the cessation of coarse vital energy and the manifestation of the vital energy of pristine cognition, resulting in the attainment of the four kinds of awareness-holder (*rig 'dzin rnam bzhi*) and the buddha-level.

This manifestation of pristine cognition occurs through four successive visionary appearances (*snang ba bzhi*), each of which has its own internal and external signs. In the first, the mundane body, speech and mind become blissful, radiant and non-conceptual. In the second, all things become apparition-like forms. In the third, all appearances manifest naturally as maṇḍalas of deities, and in the fourth, liberation from the snare of the physical body and its appearance is achieved, along with the twenty-five resultant realities of the buddha-level. These instructions of the Great Perfection are potently combined with *bar do* instructions to effect liberation in the intermediate state after death.

In brief, the atemporal maṇḍala of buddha-body and pristine cognition is obtained in a spontaneously present manner through study, reflection, and meditation (v.14).

The text then analyses the superiority of the natural Great Perfection over other teachings, and the worthy recipients to whom it should be given. The superiority of Atiyoga is known through the greatness of the individuals who accomplish it (v.15), and through the greatness of the path of Atiyoga, which is the result of all paths (v.16), traversed by all the buddhas (v.17), through which all yogins accomplish the conclusive result (v.18) and which is superior to that of the causal vehicles (v.19). In brief, there are no paths superior to this (v.20).

The worthy recipients to whom it should be given should be endowed with discriminative awareness born of study, reflection and meditation, and noble in their attributes of spiritual wealth. They should not fear the profound meanings, they should have renounced evil through their virtuous and noble aspirations, and be steadfast in their faith. Such individuals should offer their body, speech and mind to the spiritual teacher and the sacred teachings (v.21). On the other hand, the Great Perfection should not be given to unworthy recipients who would misunderstand it, act erroneously, or deviate in their vows and commitments, in their practice of the generation and perfection stages, or from the accumulation of the two provisions (tshogs gnyis). In such cases retributions are severe (v.22).

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN: THE PLEASING EULOGY

Following the continuum of the ground and the continuum of the path, which have been revealed in the previous chapters in respect of the peaceful deities, the continuum of the result is now presented in the form of a eulogy to the resultant buddha-body and pristine cognition, in the fully manifest maṇḍala of the peaceful deities.

### Introduction

Having divulged the maṇḍalas of the generation and perfection stages of the path, Samantabhadra, the Great Joyous One, sings the following eulogy to the fruitional maṇḍala of the result, which coalesces buddha-body and pristine cognition (v.1).

### Content

This chapter contains a general eulogy in five verses to the buddhas of the five enlightened families and the five pristine cognitions, which are also identified respectively with buddha-body, -speech, -mind, -attributes and -activities (vv.2-6). It concludes with a particular eulogy to the Supreme Embodiment of Samantabhadra and Samantabhadrī in union (v.7).

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN: CLOUD-LIKE EMERGENCE OF THE NATURAL MAṆḌALA OF WRATHFUL DEITIES.

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the natural spontaneous presence of the wrathful deities within the primordially pure ground, the enlightened intention that gives rise to their manifestation, and the modality of their maṇḍala array.

### Introduction

Having revealed the maṇḍala of peaceful deities, Samantabhadra, the Supreme Embodiment, then manifests as the primordial buddha-body of perfect resource in the maṇḍala of naturally manifesting wrathful deities, which is their emanational basis (v.1).

There are therefore two major aspects to the emergence of the maṇḍala of wrathful deities which Longchen Rabjampa discusses in an extensive overview, namely, the spontaneous presence of the wrathful deities in the ground and the consequent emanation of the wrathful deities, including Rudra, from the ground.

At the outset, the Sanskrit term *krodha* is defined as a deity "triumphant over disharmony and acting on behalf of living beings through the enlightened activity of wrath". There are three types of wrathful deity, corresponding to the three buddha-bodies, and these are said to have four attributes through which their wrath is forcefully expressed, ie. their reality cannot be symbolised, their pristine cognition is undeluded, their deeds are effortless, and their enlightened activity is ostensibly wrathful for the sake of those beings who are dominated by anger or hatred and its concomitant self-cherishing pride or envy. This prevalence of anger, pride or envy is said to occur owing to a disproportionate excess of energy emitted by the wrathful maṇḍala, which abides naturally within the skull of the subtle body. In terms of the ground therefore, wrathful deities are primordially present as the maṇḍala of blood-drinkers in the crown-centre of the subtle body. In terms of the path, they are visually generated through meditation, and in terms of the result, they are spontaneously and fully manifest in the Ghanavyūha realm.

As far as the emanation of the wrathful deities from the spontaneous ground is concerned: The maṇḍala of wrathful deities is recognised to be both natural and emanational without contradiction because there is a movement from its natural manifestation in the crown centre to its extraneous manifestation in the world. Through the energy of the natural maṇḍala of wrathful deities, Rudra, the archetype of rampant egohood, emerges to display unenlightened wrath and the wrathful deities of pristine cognition emerge to subdue him. Although Rudra and his followers appear to have mundane forms and powers, and in the context of a narrative are said to be subdued by Heruka and placed around him in the maṇḍala, actually Rudra is a contrivance of the wrathful deities for didactic purposes and not an individual living being who experiences suffering. Fundamentally, Rudra is atemporally and naturally manifest as Samantabhadra, and his taming indicates the reversal of the sufferings of cyclic existence through the reversal of rampant egotism.

There is no contradiction between the tantras which describe this subjugation in beginningless time and those sūtras which ostensibly refer to the subjugation of Rudra in a specific temporal setting; nor is there a fundamental distinction between Heruka who tames Rudra in the tantras and Guhyapati who does so in the sūtras because these are respectively inner or natural and outer or emanational aspects of the same wrathful maṇḍala.

## Content

This chapter concerns the emergence of mundane wrathful deities, endowed with the chronic patterns of corrupt past actions, such as Rudra, and their consequent subjugation by the wrathful deities of pristine cognition.

As to the former: On account of egotism and having violated their former tantric commitments (vv.2-3), beings are reborn in unbearable hellish domains (v.4) and then as tormented spirits (v.5). Then, once their coarse obscurations have diminished, they are consequently born in a monstrous ogre-like form which is harmful to others, on the basis of the subtle obscurations of having perversely meditated in the past on a wrathful deity and misinterpreted the correct conduct of the secret mantras. In this guise,

they then come to dominate the mundane world-systems of desire and form, terrifying their inhabitants (v.6).

The subjugation of such negative forces by the wrathful deities of pristine cognition emerges as follows: Samantabhadra in the form of Heruka observes Rudra and his activities (v.7) and, to bring about their subjugation, he assumes the meditative stability of the “kingly Magical Net of wrathful deities” (v.8). The actual subjugation is carried out in four steps by means of the “four miracles”: First, Samantabhadra and Samantabhadrī appear in union as Krodhīśvara and Krodhīśvarī (v.9). Second, through their enlightened intention they emanate a cloud of seminal energy (v.10). Third, the maṇḍala of wrathful deities, vast as the world-systems, is emanated therefrom (v.11). Fourth, this maṇḍala then generates fifteen great signs, indicating how cyclic existence is liberated in actual reality, in order to conquer Rudra and his acolytes (v.12).

Once subjugated, Rudra is wrathfully eradicated in the following manner: Samantabhadra transforms into the three-headed Mahottara or Buddha Heruka (v.13), with a retinue comprising the Herukas of the four other enlightened families (vv.14-15). Then, responding to the ferocious reaction of Rudra and his twenty-eight followers (v.16), the nine-headed form of Mahottara manifests in order to “liberate” them by wrathful sorcery (vv.17-18) and to gather together their twenty-eight consorts, the Īśvarī, through which he absorbs the entire mundane world and its inhabitants (vv.19-20). Through further meditative stability, the five Herukas then reappear to enter into non-dual union with these consorts (vv.21-23), and from their wombs, the retinue of the wrathful Mātaraī, Piśācī and Female Gatekeepers emanates (vv.24-27), taking their places along with them on the periphery of the maṇḍala (v.28).

Rudra and the proud malign forces who follow him are then revived and granted ablution, after which they are placed within the maṇḍala on the seats of the Herukas and come to acquire a certain vision of the pure maṇḍala (vv.29-31). Following their subjugation, which occurs simultaneously throughout the chiliocosms of the universe (v.32), they are accepted as retainers after taking an oath of allegiance. Their former consorts, the Īśvarī, also request the conferral of the various rites that they

might obey (vv.33-35), in response to which they are granted empowerments and injunctions (v.37).

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN: EMERGENCE OF THE MAṆḌALA OF BUDDHA-SPEECH OF THE GREAT ASSEMBLY OF WRATHFUL DEITIES

The purpose of this and the succeeding four chapters is to present the continuum of the path through which the natural maṇḍala of the wrathful deities is actually attained. In sequence, these chapters present the wrathful mantras which arouse the continuum of buddha-mind (Ch.16), the maṇḍala of images to be visualised through meditative stability (Ch.17), the offerings which are then made to this maṇḍala (Ch.18), the corresponding commitments which practitioners are encouraged to adopt (Ch.19) and the ensuing enlightened activities which are performed (Ch.20). Practically, this implies that on the basis of the three kinds of meditative stability the celestial palace and deities of the wrathful maṇḍala are visually generated. Then, the genuine beings of wrathful pristine cognition are invited and supplicated with the clasped flowers, symbolic of the yogin's awareness. Dissolving into the visualised maṇḍala, they confer commitments and are pleased by the feast-offerings, which are made in conjunction with the recitation of mantras and clear visualisation of the deities.

Consequently, enlightened activities are performed, along with concluding rituals of benediction and dedication of merit.

### Introduction

Having arrayed the natural maṇḍala of the wrathful deities, Samantabhadra, the Great Joyous One, then brings forth their maṇḍala of buddha-speech, the wrathful mantras, in order that this naturally manifesting array might be perceived externally by bodhisattvas and accomplished by yogins (v.1).

### Content

This chapter presents the five categories of mantras through which the wrathful maṇḍala is activated or energised. There are mantras which

visually generate the fifty-eight wrathful deities (vv.2-5), mantras which invite the Beings of Pristine Cognition (jñānasattva) corresponding to those deities (v.6), mantras which scatter the flowers of the yogin's awareness as a request for commitments to be imparted (v.7), mantras in the form of a prayer for spiritual accomplishment and the conferral of commitments (v.8), and mantras through which tormas-offerings are made for the sake of enlightened activity (v.9).

Finally, as an extraordinary sign of the efficaciousness of these mantras, all non-virtuous acts of body, speech and mind are incinerated and the purified body, speech and mind then blaze forth as buddha-body, -speech and -mind. The entirety of space is filled with the maṇḍalas of buddha-body, -speech and -mind.

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN: REVELATION OF THE MAṆḌALA OF WRATHFUL DEITIES

Samantabhadra, the Great Joyous One, then presents the maṇḍala of images, visualised through meditative stability, which are the necessary supports clarifying the forms assumed by those wrathful deities, along with their mantras (v.1).

### Content

This chapter describes the supporting celestial palace and the maṇḍala of wrathful deities within it. The palace (v.2) is adorned with ornaments of skulls, snakes, corpses and light (v.3) and seats in the form of bull, buffalo, leopard, tiger and bear, surmounted in turn by the proud malign forces who were subjugated (v.4). Therein, the five Heruka are present (v.5), with their diverse ornaments and thundrous roars (v.6), hand-held emblems and queens (v.7). The retinue surrounding them includes the twenty female wrathful deities, ie. the Mātaraī, Piśācī, and Gatekeepers (v.8), along with the twenty-eight Īśvarī (v.9).

As a wondrous indication of this visualisation, the blazing maṇḍala of wrathful deities is said to radiate with the apparitions of buddha-body, -speech and -mind (v.10).

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN: REVELATION OF THE SACRED OFFERINGS

Having revealed the wrathful maṇḍala, Samantabhadra, the Great Joyous One, then describes the outer, inner and secret offerings which are designed to please the wrathful maṇḍala through skilful means (v.1).

### Content

The secret offerings are associated with the paths of liberation and skilful means. The former includes the authentic offering of the primordially pure true nature of mind and the offering of forceful compassionate "liberation" which benefits the ten kinds of being endowed with negative attitudes (v.2). The latter refers to the seminal or blissful energy produced by the embrace of the male and female deities (v.3).

The inner and outer offerings are collectively known as the "desirable attributes" of the five senses, which are sacramental substances. The former are the five nectars, namely, excrement, urine, human flesh, blood and semen, through which cyclical existence is identified as nirvāṇa (v.4). The latter are the outer sacraments of food, drink, clothing and all else that possesses the desirable attributes of the senses (v.5). All these sacraments are offered to the deities of pristine cognition (v.6).

The benefits attained through the making of such offerings are the common accomplishments associated with the four rites of enlightened activity (v.7) and the supreme accomplishment of the three buddha-bodies consequent on the practice of symbolic and non-symbolic meditation (v.8). In sum, all worlds are filled with pleasing offerings (v.9).

## CHAPTER NINETEEN: COMMITMENTS

Samantabhadra, the Great Joyous One, then divulges the supreme commitments in order that yogins of secret mantra might swiftly accomplish the result to which they aspire (v.1).

### Content

This chapter is an exegesis of the commitments associated with the maṇḍala of wrathful deities. The Sanskrit term samaya is defined as “ a commitment requiring the taking of a conventional oath of allegiance, which is laid down because benefits are obtained when it is guarded and retribution is exacted when it degenerates”.

The essence of the supreme commitments, the hallmark of their superiority, is that dissonant mental states may be engaged without accruing negative acts because the vows maintained by adherents of the lower vehicles are fully integrated with these commitments. Therefore they integrate the lower vows which comprise: the mind-control generated through the seven levels of prātimokṣa vow taken for the sake of individual peace and happiness; the bodhisattva vows which bind the mind with an altruistic moral discipline to achieve realisation and benefit others; and the vows of the awareness-holders which benefit others by transforming dissonant mental states into pristine cognition. All these three trainings are gathered without contradiction in the commitments of the secret mantra (v.2). In this integration the most minute defects in the observance of the lower vows are purified (v.3). Even the four inimical defeats— murder, stealing, lying, and sexual misconduct, which pious attendants guard against through the prātimokṣa vows are not contradicted because phenomena are transformed into the maṇḍala of deities. Similarly, the vows of the bodhisattvas are not contradicted because they are retained by extraordinary compassion and skilful means. The means of gathering all such vows within the commitments of the secret mantras are inherent in the rites of "liberation" and the practices of sexual yoga because mind-control and the three kinds of moral discipline known to bodhisattvas are always present (vv.4-7).

As to the classification of the commitments, five basic and ten ancillary commitments have been enumerated (vv.8-10). The former are the commitments never to abandon the Three Precious Jewels, to venerate the spiritual teacher, not to interrupt the recitation of mantras and securing of the sealing hand-gestures, to have loving kindness for those who enter the genuine path, and not to divulge the secret truths. These are defined as aspects of buddha-body, -speech and -mind to be guarded and attained in order that the seed of buddha nature, latent in all beings, might not be obscured (v.11). The ancillary commitments comprise five dissonant mental

states which are not to be abandoned and five nectars which are to be acquired because they assist the observance of the basic commitments (v.12). The benefits which follow from the keeping of commitments are the attainment of buddhahood itself, while the unpleasant results of suffering and lack of accomplishment are the retributions exacted when they are broken (vv.13-16).

While all these commitments are subsumed by the indestructible reality of buddha-body, -speech and -mind (v.17), there is also a more detailed enumeration of three hundred and sixty subdivisions of the basic and ancillary commitments (vv.18-19), and, beyond that, they may even be considered inconceivable in numerical terms, owing to the inconceivable nature of appearance and emptiness (vv.20-21).

Consequent on keeping the commitments, the yogin is venerated by mundane beings (v.22), blessed by sublime beings (v.23), and attains the rank of an awareness-holder within the perceptual range of the buddhas (v.24). He or she integrates all vows and commitments in the aforementioned manner (v.25), and has the ability to restore broken commitments (v.26).

## CHAPTER TWENTY: CONSECRATION OF SPONTANEOUS ENLIGHTENED ACTIVITY

Samantabhadra, the Great Joyous One, then becomes absorbed in the meditative stability known as "the consecration of the spontaneous commitment" in order that those who keep the commitments might engage in enlightened activity (v.1).

### Content

This chapter begins with an explanation of the four kinds of enlightened activity, symbolised in succession by the shapes of the sacred Sanskrit letters *Evaṃ Mayā*. These are respectively the rite of wrath (vv.2-4), the rite of subjugation (vv.5-7), the rite of enrichment (vv.8-10), and the rite of pacification (vv.11-13), each of which is presented in three phases, namely the making of a burnt offering, the piercing with the ritual dagger (*kīla*), and the enactment of the dance-steps that oppress negative forces.

Particular injunctions are subsequently given to those mundane beings on the periphery of the maṇḍala who consume the residual offerings of the feast, exhorting them to maintain the former oaths administered to them by Mahottara Heruka (vv.14-15).

The main part of the enlightened activity of the wrathful maṇḍala however is known as the rite of the dance steps and hand-gestures (v.16). This action, when performed by the five central Heruka and their consorts, brings about the accomplishment of all five kinds of enlightened activity (v.17). When engaged by the eight Mātaraī, it brings about subjugation, enrichment and pacification (v.18). When engaged by the eight Piśācī it brings about wrathful destruction (v.19), and when engaged by the twenty-eight Īśvari, it fulfils curses and imprecations (v.20).

Corresponding to the four kinds of enlightened activity, which culminate in the wrathful rite of "liberation" are the places conducive to the attainment of their respective activities, namely, firepits for the rite of wrath, solitary tree-trunks for the rite of subjugation, thickets for the rite of enrichment, and trees or woodland for the rite of pacification. Each of the rites also requires a distinctive meditative stability (v.21). Thereby, all the tathāgatas are trained in the performance of enlightened activities (v.22).

This article is the fourth of a six part series which brings you Gyurme Dorje's extensive and remarkable introduction to the Guhyagarbha Tantra, the flagship tantra of the Nyingma School of the Tibetan Buddhism.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE: EULOGY TO THE WRATHFUL DEITIES

The purpose of this chapter is to present the continuum of the result, as fully manifested in the maṇḍala of wrathful deities.

The assembled host of Samantabhadra, the Great Joyous One, having perfectly presented these enlightened activities of the wrathful maṇḍala, then sings a eulogy to the naturally manifesting buddha-body and pristine cognition (v.1).

## Content

The actual verses of the eulogy are dedicated to the enlightened families of buddha-body (v.2), buddha-speech (v.3), buddha-mind (v.4), buddha-attributes (v.5) and buddha-activities (v.6), ie. to the central pairs of the Herukas and their consorts. These culminate in a particular eulogy to Mahottara Heruka and Krodhīśvarī, who embody the celestial palace of the wrathful maṇḍala itself (v.7).

## CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO: THAT WHICH IS PLEASING AND RETAINED

The final chapter concerns the manner in which the Guhyagarbha Tantra is taught and entrusted to its worthy recipients or lineage holders.

Having perfectly revealed the peaceful and wrathful maṇḍalas of the Magical Net, Samantabhadra, the Great Joyous One, now emphasises that this tantra-text must be firmly retained for the sake of posterity (v.1).

## Content

This tantra-text is considered to be the ground, path and result, and the very essence of all the tathāgatas (v.2), while other paths associated with the different vehicles are merely stepping stones in its direction (v.3). It should not be given to those who would not benefit by receiving it since the preliminaries and lesser paths will suffice for them (v.4). The expositor who confers the empowerments and instructions associated with this tantra is actually identified with Samantabhadra (v.5).

This tantra which expounds the reality of the ground, path and result is the most secret of all teachings, devoid of exaggeration and depreciation, and is divulged only to worthy recipients (v.6). Prophetic declarations are given to the effect that those who retain and teach it will attain all levels and become awareness-holders (v.7).

Moreover, it is significant that on its conclusion, the teacher, Samantabhadra, and the assembled retinue of tathāgatas reveal their continuing presence as ornaments in the buddhafield of the Bounteous Array, without change or transition, unlike the teachings of lesser vehicles where the five excellent circumstances surrounding the teachings fade at the conclusion of these teachings (v.8).

## THE PERFECT CONCLUSION

Commenting on the original colophon of the Guhyagarbha Tantra, Longchen Rabjampa points out that it is derived from the Great Tantra of the Magical Net of Vajrasattva in One Hundred Thousand Chapters. In particular, within that cycle, it is known as the all-embracing universal transmission of all vehicles, and the supreme basis of the unsurpassed secret mantras.

### 8. TEN ASPECTS OF THE GUHYAGARBHA TANTRA

In contrast to the structural approach, outlined above, which presents the content of the Guhyagarbhatantra in terms of the continua of the ground, path and result or from the standpoints of Mahāyoga, and Atiyoga, a quite different analysis is made by Ju Mipham Namgyel in his *Summary of the Guhyagarbha entitled Nucleus of Inner Radiance* (sPyi don 'od gsal snying po). This commentary focuses on the so-called ten topics or aspects of the mantras (mantradaśatattva), which are generally recognised, indicating how they are fully contained within the actual verses of the root-text. These ten aspects, each of which is discussed in turn, are enumerated as follows: A view of reality, determinate conduct, maṇḍala array, successive gradation of empowerment, commitment which is not transgressed, enlightened activity which is displayed, fulfillment of aspiration, unwavering meditative stability, offerings which bring the goal to fruition, and mantra recitation accompanied by the sealing hand-gestures which bind [the practitioner to realisation].

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This is generally defined as the intellectual perspective of reality once exaggeration and depreciation have been eradicated by means of discriminative awareness (shes rab). The status of sentient beings is ascertained, in terms of the true establishment of this view, to comprise those of no understanding, those of wrong understanding, and those who do not fully understand genuine reality (i.e., the adherents of the causal vehicles), as well as those who understand the meanings of spiritual discipline, intention, secrecy, and the naturally secret truth (i.e., the

respective adherents of Kriyātantra, Ubhayatantra, Yogatantra and Mahāyogatantra).

In particular the view of Mahāyoga epitomised in this tantra is that phenomenal existence is ascertained to be fundamental reality by means of four axioms of correct view, namely, the axiom of the four kinds of realisation (rtogs pa bzhi), the axiom of the three purities (dag pa gsum), the axiom of the four modes of sameness (mnyam bzhi), and the axiom of supreme embodiment (bdag nyid chen po).

i) The four kinds of realisation are indicated in Ch. 11, v. 2:

Single basis and modality of the seed-syllables,  
Blessing and direct perception:  
Through [these] four kinds of excellent realisation,  
All things are the great king, manifestly perfect.

Now, the axiom of single basis (rgyu gcig pa) establishes all things to be naturally present and uncreated, modality of the seed-syllables (yig 'bru'i tshul) establishes all things to be an unceasing display of pure appearance, blessing or consecration (byin gyis brlabs pa) establishes all things as an indivisible essence of uncreated sameness and pure appearance, and direct perception (mngon sum) establishes all phenomena [as the deities of the maṇḍala], without intellectual characteristics.

ii) The axiom of the three purities establishes the mundane world, its inhabitants and the mind-stream as a great purity.

iii) The axiom of the four modes of sameness, namely, emptiness, the coalescence of appearance and emptiness, the freedom from conceptual elaboration and sameness itself, establishes all things subsumed in relative and ultimate truth as a great sameness.

iv) The axiom of supreme embodiment establishes all things to abide primordially in the embodiment of a single pristine cognition (ye shes), which is the true nature of mind (sems nyid).

The ascertainment of this abiding nature of reality (gnas lugs) is indeed the fundamental view or goal of Mahāyoga, and its axiomatic exegesis is explored by Mipham Rinpoche in three topics which he outlines as follows:

i) The view of apparitional reality is the view that the mundane world and its inhabitants are present as a great purity in the maṇḍala of supportive buddha-body and supported pristine cognition, respectively.

ii) The view of reality itself is that all things partake of a great indivisible sameness.

iii) The view of intrinsic or intuitive awareness is that in which one is to become individually aware that the superior truth of the indivisibility of purity and sameness is the great buddha-body of reality (mahādharmakāya).

In the *Summary entitled Nucleus of Inner Radiance* (sPyi don 'od gsal snying po), pp. 69-107, he sets forth his statements in support of this view, comprising a proof of the superiority of the mantra view over that of the sūtras and a proof of sameness, purity and indivisibility with reference to the mantra view itself. In conclusion (pp. 107-113) he shows how each of the other ten aspects of mantra depends on purity and sameness of view.

#### MEDITATIVE STABILITY (TING NGE 'DZIN), SPYI DON, PP. 113-127

This is essentially defined as the equipoised awareness abiding one-pointedly with reference to or in harmony with a visualised object, without obscuration or agitation. Meditative stability is initially acquired when a practitioner applies the appropriate motivation, effort, mindfulness, alertness, and equanimity. Then, the experience of tranquility (śamatha/zhi gnas) is refined by nine kinds of skilful means which enable the mind to abide in its natural state, giving rise incidentally to experiences of bliss, radiance and non-conceptualisation.

According to the inner classes of tantra, meditative stability specifically refers to the practice of the generation stage (bskyed rim) and the perfection stage (rdzogs rim). The meditative stability of the generation stage, in its most extensive form, refines propensities associated with the

four places of birth, develops the five awakenings during the course of one's life and the four rites of indestructible reality. In its middling form it refers to the so-called the three rites. These are both associated with Mahāyoga. Then, in its concise form it refers to the spontaneously perfect meditative stability associated with Anuyoga; and in its most concise form it refers to the instantaneous recollection, associated with Atiyoga.

The meditative stability of the perfection stage includes the path of skilful means (thabs lam) by which the energy channels, currents of vital energy and points of seminal energy (rtsa rlung thig le) in the subtle body are controlled and the coalescent path of liberation (grol lam), which concerns non-conceptualising yoga and is effected in three steps: willfully applied meditation, otherwise known as the yoga of blessings, effective meditation, also known as the yoga of the imaginary, and instantaneous meditation, also known as the yoga of perfection.

#### CONDUCT (SPYOD PA), SPYI DON, PP. 127-136

Conduct essentially refers to all the activities associated with body, speech and mind which are to be engaged when the practices of skilful means (thabs) and discriminative awareness (shes rab) are applied. It comprises spiritual discipline on the path of skilful means (thabs lam brtul zhugs kyi spyod pa) and careful restraint on the path of liberation (grol lam bag yod kyi spyod pa). In periods of meditative absorption, conduct refers to meditative stability itself, whereas in post-meditation, it concerns the phenomenal display which arises before the mind. The distinctive conduct associated with the practice of Mahāyoga includes the rites of sexual yoga (sbyor ba) which generate delight and rites of "forceful liberation" (sgrol ba), which are the wrathful application of compassion.

#### MAṄḌALA (DKYIL 'KHOR), SPYI DON, PP. 136-144

The term maṇḍala essentially refers to a central deity embodying fundamental reality surrounded by peripheral clusters of deities, but it may also be defined as the basis through which essential enlightened attributes are apprehended. It is classified according to the maṇḍalas of ground, path and result. The maṇḍala of the ground refers to the primordial presence of the mundane world and its inhabitants, respectively as the supportive

meditational deities and supported pristine cognition. The maṇḍala of the path refers to the symbolic or illustrative images of meditation and the genuine maṇḍalas of buddha-body, -speech and -mind, while the maṇḍala of the result refers to the conclusive fruition, the "rank of Samantabhadra" whereon buddha-body and pristine cognition are present, without conjunction or disjunction.

#### EMPOWERMENT (DBANG BSKUR), SPYI DON, PP. 144-152

Empowerment is essentially defined as the initial disipation of stains covering the body, speech and mind, which facilitates the conferral of mature pristine cognition. It is generally classified according to the vase-empowerment ('bum dbang) which purifies the subtle body and its energy channels (rtsa) into the buddha-body of emanation body (sprul sku), the secret empowerment (gsang dbang) which purifies subtle speech and its vital energy (rlung) into the buddha-body of perfect resource (longs spyod rdzogs pa'i sku), the empowerment of discriminating pristine cognition (shes rab ye shes kyi dbang) which purifies the subtle mind and its point of seminal energy (thig le) into the buddha-body of reality (chos-sku), and the empowerment of word and meaning (tshig don gyi dbang) which purifies these three in equal proportion into the buddha-body of essentiality (ngo bo nyid kyi sku).

According to Mahāyoga in particular, there are three categories of empowerment: those of beneficence (phan dbang), ability (nus pa'i dbang) and profundity (zab dbang), the first two of which correspond to the vase empowerment and the last to the other three.

#### COMMITMENT (DAM TSHIG), SPYI DON, PP. 152-185

Commitment is essentially defined as a limit which is not to be transgressed. When classified, there are general commitments including the monastic vows concerning individual liberation (prātimokṣa), the bodhisattva vows concerning the cultivation of an altruistic intention (sems bskyed) and the commitments of the tantras, as upheld by the Sarmapa mantra traditions. In particular, according to Mahāyoga, there is an enumeration of twenty-eight commitments, or another comprising five basic and ten ancillary commitments. The five basic ones are not to

abandon the unsurpassed teachings of Mahāyoga, to venerate the spiritual teacher, not to interrupt the continuity of mantra recitation and sealing hand-gestures, to maintain loving kindness for neophytes entering the path of the sacred teachings which leads to buddhahood, and not to divulge secrets to unworthy recipients. The ten ancillary commitments are not to abandon the five poisons and to accumulate the five nectars.

#### ATTAINMENT (SGRUB PA), SPYI DON, PP. 185-202

Attainment is essentially defined as the acquisition of supreme and common spiritual accomplishments through the extraordinary means of the secret mantras. It is therefore classified according to the accomplishments (dngos grub) which are either supreme or common. The ancillary supports (rten) of attainment include material sacraments, mantra recitation, meditative stability, and physical postures. The essence (snying po) of the practice which brings about spiritual attainment is the generation and perfection stages of meditation; and its modalities (sgrub tshul) are the so-called four aspects of ritual service and attainment (bsnyen sgrub).

In particular, Mahāyoga includes the extraordinary attainments of the feast-offerings (tshogs), whereby male and female yogins attain the rank of the awareness-holders by means of the four aspects of ritual service and attainment.

#### OFFERING (MCHOD PA), SPYI DON, PP. 202-215

Offerings are essentially defined as the means for venerating and producing delight in the meditational deities because the making of offerings precedes all virtuous actions and engagement in all activities. When classified, offerings include the outer offerings of everyday resources (phyi nyer spyod kyi mchod pa), the inner offerings of commitment (nang dam rdzas kyi mchod pa), the secret offerings of sexual yoga and "forceful liberation" (gsang ba sbyor sgrol gyi mchod pa), and the real offerings of great sameness (de kho na nyid mnyam pa chen po'i mchod pa). These are all integrated in the course of the feast-offering ceremony.

#### ENLIGHTENED ACTIVITY (PHRIN LAS), SPYI DON, PP. 215-226

Enlightened activity is essentially defined as the extraordinary skilful actions, expressed by bodhisattvas for the sake of others through the four immeasurable aspirations (tshad med bzhi). It is classified, according to its diverse goals, into supreme and common activities, the former generating the seed of liberation in other minds and the latter manifesting provisional blissful results.

Also, among the ancillary supports for enlightened activity, there are outer activities that relate to the external sacraments and inner activities of body, speech and mind. Now, some activities are said to benefit sentient beings while others eradicate obstacles, notably the four rites of pacification (zhi), enrichment (rgyas), subjugation (dbang) and wrath (drag). When the motivation behind activities is considered, there are common self-centred activities and supreme altruistic activities. All these may be attained through the practice of the perfection stage, the generation stage or through the recitation of mantras.

#### SEALING (PHYAG RGYA), SPYI DON, PP. 226-237

Sealing is essentially defined as the means of resolutely securing the buddha-body, -speech, -mind and -activities. It is classified generally according to the seals of ground, path and result. Among these, in the case of the generation stage of meditation, the seals of the path comprise: the Great Seal of buddha-body (sku phyag rgya chen po), the Teaching Seal of buddha-speech (gsung chos kyi phyag rgya), the Commitment Seal of buddha-mind (thugs dam tshig gi phyag rgya) and the Action Seal of buddha-activity (phrin las las kyi phyag rgya). In the case of the perfection stage, these same four seals are secured by engaging with a female consort (gzungs ma), by cultivating the path to buddhahood, or through the four resultant pristine cognitions. The act of sealing is symbolically represented by the diverse hand-gestures.

#### MANTRA (SNGAGS), SPYI DON, PP. 237-259

Mantra is essentially defined as “the extraordinary skilful means which protects the subtle mind and its discriminative awareness”. Now, the syllables of buddha-speech, including all the vowels and consonants, are considered to abide naturally within the subtle body, to generate the

celestial palace of the meditational deities, to generate the miraculous emanational array of the meditational deities, and to be vocalised as sounds and letters. These four modalities of buddha-speech have their corresponding attainments since they respectively relate to the essential nature of actual reality, or emptiness, to the nature of apparitional reality, to the blessings of the buddhas, and to the unimpeded potency of their speech. The results attained through the recitation of mantras include both provisional and conclusive levels of realisation.

In terms of their practical application, mantras are said to be of three kinds: secret mantras (gsang sngags), gnostic mantras (rigs sngags) and retentive mantras (gzungs sngags), the first so-called because their skilful means is secret, the second because their essence is awareness or pristine cognition, and the third because consecration occurs when they are retained.

In the course of his summary, Mipham Rinpoche concludes each of these ten sections with a statement showing how all the ten aspects of the secret mantra practice are completely interrelated. For such reasons, the Guhyagarbha Tantra fulfils all the criteria required of an unsurpassed tantra-text.

## 9. ORIGIN OF THE GUHYAGARBHA TANTRA

Any discussion of the historical position of the Guhyagarbha Tantra must take note of the controversy regarding its origin which prevailed in Tibet in the centuries immediately following the later propagation of the Buddhist teachings. We have already observed that dissemination of the ancient tantras was restricted in consequence of their secrecy and the danger of their misapplication. In the eleventh century, Lha Lama Yeshe-o and others sought to outlaw the teaching and practice of tantra, accusing the adherents of this tradition of engaging in sbyor sgrol rites, ie. sexual practices and wrathful expressions of buddha-activity. The Guhyagarbha, one of the main texts expounding these methods, was subjected to criticism. Other such texts, including the Guhyasamāja Tantra, were paradoxically exempted from this attack. Nonetheless, as we shall see in our examination of the text itself, the expression of these techniques in the Guhyagarbha appears to have a particularly subtle enlightened intention when contrasted with the overt sexual and macabre descriptions found in certain other tantras. Further study of the Collected Tantras of the Nyingmapa,

particularly of its Anuyoga and Atiyoga texts, would, it has been suggested, reveal that the ancient translations appear to have their own distinct terminology and a literary style better suited to the Tibetan language than the rigid formalism present in many of the later translations, giving some weight to Rongzompa's early critique.

An incident from the life of Zurchungpa Sherab Drak alludes to this controversy with some humour. When four students of the Kadampa teacher Khyungpo Drak-se were defeated by Zurchungpa in debate and agreed to become his disciples, having understood the profundity of his view, Khyungpo Drak-se announced:

"Anyone who kills one like Zurchungpa, who harbours perverse opinions and leads everyone astray, will certainly attain buddhahood!" Zurchungpa, on hearing this, remained silent without thought of anger and was later seen smiling. On being asked the reason for his mirth, he answered, "As for doctrines, this, my secret mantra-tradition of the greater vehicle, is it! For it is the tradition of secret mantras that maintains that buddhahood may be attained by "liberation"; the dialecticians do not think so. Now, even such a great dialectician as Khyungpo Drak-se has said that anyone who kills one like Zurchungpa will attain buddhahood. So, in his innermost heart, he has turned to my doctrine. Therefore, I am delighted!"

Another eleventh century figure, Go Khugpa Lhe-tse, reputedly nursing a grudge because he had been refused instruction by Zurpoche, in his Broadside ('Byams yig) sought to refute the authentic origin of the Guhyagarbha Tantra, imputing it to have "four faults" (skyon bzhi), and claiming that it was not known in India. The tantra was generally considered by Go to lack the five excellent circumstances (phun sum tshogs pa lnga), i.e. those of teacher, retinue, location, teaching and time. He imputed it to have a flawed introduction (klong log), i.e., that unlike other tantras it had no audience of bodhisattvas; a flawed sense of time (dus log), i.e., that it speaks of four times instead of three; a flawed maṇḍala (dkyil 'khor log), i.e., that Vajrasattva appears at the centre of the maṇḍala instead of Vairocana; and a flawed text (rgyud log) because it refers to other tantras when indicating the auspicious times and days for its practice.

Slight variations on these "four faults" have been reported in the later writings of Sodokpa Lodro Gyeltsen, Pawo Tsuklak Trengwa, and others. Sodokpa, in his *Dialogue which is a Dragon's Roar of Scriptural Transmission and Logical Reasoning* (Dri lan lung dang rig pa'i 'brug sgra), p. 33, holds Go Lhe-tse to have imputed the Guhyagarbha to be flawed in word (sgra skyon), flawed in meaning (don skyon), flawed by contradiction (gal skyon) and flawed by disconnection (ma 'brel ba'i skyon).

Pawo Tsuklak Trengwa in his *Scholar's Feast of Doctrinal History* (Chos 'byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston), p. 179, speaks of "four errors" (mi rigs pa bzhi), namely, the error of the Guhyagarbha's introductory statement "At the time of this explanation" ('di skad bshad pa'i dus na ces mi rigs pa), the error of its maṇḍala which is said to have an immeasurable ground (gzhi tshad med mi rigs pa), the error of its explaining the three times as four times (dus gsum la dus bzhir bshad pa mi rigs pa) and the error of Vajrasattva being the central deity of the maṇḍala instead of Vairocana (dkyil 'khor gyi gtso bo rdo rje sems dpas byas pa mi rigs pa).

The Nyingma response to these four flaws, faults or errors is disclosed by Longchen Rabjampa in the course of his commentary entitled *Dispelling the Darkness of the Ten Directions* (Phyogs bcu mun sel), a complete annotated translation of which forms the main part of this book. Vigorous counter-refutations have also been made, in particular by Chomden Rigpei Raldri, and the aforementioned authors— Pawo Tsuklak Trengwa and Sodokpa Lodro Gyeltsen.

Chomden Rigpei Raldri's commentary is entitled *Ornamental Flowers: A Proof of the Secret Nucleus* (gSang snying sgrub pa rgyan gyi me tog). No longer extant as a distinct work, most of it survives or is cited in other texts, including Gyel-se Thuchoktsel's *Precious Treasury of Doctrinal History* (Chos 'byung rin po che'i gter mdzod), II, f. 357-61, the Great Fifth Dalai Lama's *Stream of the Ganges: Record of Teachings Received* (gSan yig gan ga'i chu rgyun), Vol. 4, p. 397, the Collected Writings of Sodokpa, Vol. 1, pp. 500-509 and 524-526 (= Nges don 'brug sgra), and Longchen III Tashi Namgyel's *Ganges Stream of Immaculate Eloquence* (Legs bshad dri med ga'i chu rgyun), p. 20. References to this treatise are also found in Pawo Tsuklak Trengwa's *Scholar's Feast of Doctrinal History* (Chos 'byung mhas pa'i dga' ston), p. 178.

In Sodokpa's version, Rigpei Raldri is quoted as follows:

This [Guhyagarbha] Tantra is genuine for the following reasons: The master Viśvamitra in his Great Commentary on the Glorious Guhyasamāja (dpal gsang ba 'dus pa 'grel chen, T. 1844), in the course of his comments on the passage [from the Guhyasamāja]: "How far does the Being of Pristine Cognition reach?..." cites the Guhyagarbha (Ch.1, v.3) as follows:

In the abode of Akaniḥāha without extremes or centre, on the radiant wheel of pristine cognition that is the limitless ground, there is his celestial palace blazing forth with jewels of pristine cognition, completely uninterrupted throughout the ten directions...

And also (Ch.1, v.6):

In every inconceivable [world-system], he appears universally as diverse [forms of] buddha-body, -speech, and -mind.

Then, in commenting on the [Guhyasamāja] passage: "The stūpa should be known to be the palatial abode of all buddhas..." he cites the Guhyagarbha (Ch.1, v.3) as follows:

Its spire is the pristine cognition central to all, in which all maṇḍalas of the buddhas of the ten directions and four times without exception are not distinct from one another, and are of a single essence.

Then, commenting on the passage, "Substantial existence is based on insubstantiality..." he cites (Ch.2, v.6):

Emaho! This wondrous marvelous reality

Is the secret of all the perfect buddhas.

All is created through the uncreated.

At creation itself there is no creation.

Then, while explaining the meaning of the "secret" [empowerment] he says, "The Guhyagarbha (Ch.10) speaks of five empowerments."

Moreover, he quotes the passage (Ch.6, vv. 9-11) beginning:

Their [body-colours] are dark blue, white, yellow, scarlet...

up to:

...[Pervasive] without extremes or centre,

[It is an unthinkable] spontaneously present [maṇḍala].

and he says, "According to the Guhyagarbha, there are three realities."

In these and all other such instances Viśvamitra begins [his commentary on the Guhyasamāja] by quoting from the Guhyagarbha.

The four perverse faults, et cetera, [criticised by Go Lhe-tse] are also to be rejected:

1. [When texts begin with the words] Thus I have expounded, it traditionally means that they were compiled by the buddhas themselves, for it is impossible for even the tenth level bodhisattvas to compile all the teachings of the buddhas. As it says in the Verification of the Secret (śriguhyasiddhi, T. 2217), composed by master Saroruha as a commentary on the Guhyasamāja:

Most masters claim  
That the most radiant tantra,  
The glorious Guhyasamāja,  
Had as its compiler  
The spiritual warrior called Lokeśvara.  
But by the kindness of my venerable guru  
I know that the compiler of the glorious Guhyasamāja  
Could not have been any other,  
And so the being who propounded it  
Was that tantra's author,  
The indestructible reality of mind.

In accord with this explanation, there is a tradition whereby the exponent himself is the compiler.

2. As for the immeasurable ground: the Abhidharma, too, explains that Akaniḥāha is immeasurable.

3. Concerning the four times: Viśvamitra's Great Commentary (T. 1844) says: "Thus, the fourth time should be known to be sameness..." Moreover, the phrase, By all the lords of the ten directions and four times is also found in the new translations. Buddhaguhya explains that it refers to the four aeons.

4. Regarding Vajrasattva's appearance at the centre [of the maṇḍala]: even the new translations explain that the foremost figure in the maṇḍala may change positions.

Concerning the passage: The final punctuation dots (tig) indicate the discriminative awareness through which names are formed (Ch. 4, v. 15): the Indian manuscript of the Guhyagarbha reads sūtrī prajñā tiḥyati. Sūtrī ("thread") is the Sanskrit word for thiḡ ("measuring line").

Sūryaprabhāsiṃha's commentary (Guhyagarbhatattvanirṇayavyākhyānā-  
āīkā, P.4719) explains [tig as being equivalent] to thig. Tig is an archaicism.

As for the reference to other tantras [which is found in the Guhyagarbha]:  
All the tantras expounded later on, such as the Hevajra (T. 417-8), also refer  
to [texts such as] the Summation of the Real (Tattvasaṃgraha, T. 479)  
which had been delivered first.

Rigpei Raldri's argument thus seeks to establish the authenticity of the  
Guhyagarbha Tantra, citing quotations from it which occur in celebrated  
Indian texts of the Guhyasamāja cycle. While certain tantras may have been  
written down directly in the Tibetan language, there is no evidence to  
include the Guhyagarbha among these.

Further criticisms levelled by Drigung Peldzin at the Atiyoga system in  
general and at Padmasambhava's *Garland of Esoteric Instructions* (Man ngag  
lta 'phreng), a well-known commentary on Chapter Thirteen of our text,  
have been examined by Sodokpa and Jigme Lingpa, and more recently by  
the contemporary scholars Namkhai Norbu and Samten Karmay. The latter  
has noted passages from this commentary which occur in Nubchen's early  
work, *Lamp for the Eye of Meditative Concentration* (bSam gtan mig sgron),  
and translated the entire text as reproduced by Rongzompa. In addition, he  
has brought to our attention the existence among the Dunhuang  
documents of certain passages from Sūryaprabhāsiṃha's Indian treatise,  
*Commentary which Elucidates the Real Nature of the Glorious Guhyagarbha*  
(Guhyagarbhatattva-nirṇayavyākhyānāīkā). These early literary and  
historical sources therefore tend to favour the traditional view that the text  
was introduced during the late eighth century.

That many of the Nyingma tantras were unknown in eleventh century  
India is not surprising when one considers that their translations are  
attributed to the eighth century and that the majority of them were said to  
have been imported into eighth century Tibet, not from the Magadha  
heartland of North India, but from Oḍḍiyāna and adjacent regions in the  
north-west. Atiśa, on a visit to the library at Pehar Kordzoling in Samye, is  
known to have marvelled at the existence of tantras which no longer  
survived in North-Central India.

The arguments raised by Lha Lama Yeshe-o and Go Lhe-tse against the Guhyagarbha Tantra lost their controversial impact by the fourteenth century. Indeed, they became dead issues for Tibetan historians such as Go Lotsāwa Zhonpel (1392-1481) who personally acquired the Sanskrit manuscript of the root-tantra which had been rediscovered at Samye in the interim.

In consequence, Sodokpa could credibly present the following sixteenth century account of its introduction and translation in his treatise entitled *Dispelling Mental Darknesss Concerning the Biography of Master Padmasambhava, the Second Buddha* (Slob dpon sangs rgyas gnyis pa padma 'byung gnas kyi rnam par thar pa yid kyi mun sel): Therein (p.128), perhaps following Sangye Lingpa's *Golden Rosary Injunction of Padmasambhava* (bKa' thang gser 'phreng), p.400, he states that the Sanskrit manuscripts of the *Eightfold Division of the Magical Net* (sGyu 'phrul sde brgyad) were taken from Nālandā Vihāra by Padmasambhava and then translated at Gyakar Drajurling, on the south side of Samye. The texts were then kept at the Ketshang in Chimphu when no longer extant in India.

In his *Dialogue which is a Dragon's Roar of Scriptural Transmission and Logical Reasoning* (Dris lan lung dang rig pa'i 'brug sgra), p. 12, Sodokpa then repeats Go Lotsāwa's account of the rediscovery of the Sanskrit manuscript in Samye by the great paṇḍita śākyaśrī (1127-1225). The latter entrusted it to Taton Ziji, from whom it passed into the hands of Sha-ge Lotsāwa and thence to Chomden Rigpei Raldri who composed the aforementioned treatise in defence of the tantra. Subsequently, Tharpa Lotsāwa is said to have retranslated the Sanskrit version of the root-text known as the rGyud phyi ma, with two additional chapters (either Chs. 21-22 or Chs. 23 and 24) for the first time, and these were revised by Go Lotsāwa Zhonupel in person.

Later Nyingma writers such as Rigdzin Jigme Lingpa refused to debate the specific points of Go Lhe-tse, considering that the past refutations of Chomden Rigpei Raldri and Sodokpa were unanswerable. That similar views were also held by followers of the New Translation Schools is evidenced by the following dismissive response of the Sakyapa scholar, Zilungpa śākya Chokden (1428-1507):

It is not necessary to prove laboriously that  
 The Nyingmapa doctrines were translated from Indian originals.  
 It is enough that they are proven to be  
 The teaching of the emanational master [Padmasambhava].  
 Although they do not conform with the mantras and symbols  
 Of those translated from India later on,  
 The proof of their validity is infallible accomplishment  
 Through their supreme and common attainment.  
 They may be compared with the doctrines taken  
 By supreme, accomplished masters from various, great lands,  
 And which were not translated in India  
 From their respective volumes;  
 For it is said that with Vajrasattva's consent  
 The compilers of those transmitted precepts  
 Were themselves permitted to teach them  
 In the language of each different country.  
 The Nyingmapa doctrinal traditions that definitely were  
 Translated from India require no proof.  
 Having formulated arguments one might prove  
 The indefinite ones to be treatises,  
 But the great ones who came before in Tibet,  
 Discovering this to be an artificial, conceptual path,  
 Have avoided wandering upon it,  
 As they themselves have explained.

## 10. THE INDIAN TRADITIONS OF THE GUHYAGARBHA TANTRA

The following account of the Indian and Tibetan historical lineages  
 associated with this tantra is based on sources compiled by HH Dudjom  
 Jigdrel Yeshe Dorje in *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism*, Book 2.  
 These include: Go Lotsāwa's *The Blue Annals* (Deb ther sngon po); Pawo  
 Tsuklak Trengwa's *Scholar's Feast of Doctrinal History* (Chos 'byung mkhas  
 pa'i dga' ston); Tāranātha's *History of Buddhism in India* (Dam pa'i chos  
 rin po che 'phags yul du ji ltar dar ba'i tshul gsal bar ston pa dgos 'dod kun  
 'byung); Longchen Rabjampa's *Great Lecture on the History of the Innermost  
 Spirituality, Mother and Son* (sNying thig ma bu'i lo rgyus gtong thun chen  
 mo); Lochen Dharmaśrī's *Lamp which Illuminates the Essence of Tantra,  
 Transmission, and Esoteric Instruction: a General Exposition of the Empowerment*

of the *Sūtra Which Gathers All Intentions* (mDo dbang gi spyi don rgyud lung man ngag gi gnad sel byed sgron me); Jamgon Kongtrul's *Lives of the Hundred Treasure-finders, a Beauteous Rosary of Precious Beryl* (gTer ston brgya rtsa'i rnam thar rin chen bai dūrya'i phreng mdzes); and the aforementioned catalogues of the Collected Tantras compiled by Rigdzin Jigme Lingpa and Gyurme Tshewang Chodrub respectively.

#### KING JA & KUKKURĀ JA:

The legendary appearance of the Mahāyoga tantras in ancient India is associated with King Ja of Sahor, who is considered to be the subject of various prophetic declarations, such as the following from the *Subsequent Tantra of the Emergence of Cakrasamvara* (Saṃvarodayottaratantra):

One hundred and twelve years from now,  
When I have vanished from here,  
A quintessential doctrine,  
Renowned in the three divine realms,  
Will be revealed by the Lord of Secrets  
To one who is named King Ja,  
Who will appear by virtue of great merits  
At Jambudvīpa's eastern frontier.

And in the Tantra which Comprises the Supreme Path of the Means which Clearly Reveal All-Positive Pristine Cognition (Kun bzang ye shes gsal bar ston pa'i thabs kyi lam mchog 'dus pa'i rgyud, Tingkye Vol. 3):  
The Mahāyoga tantras will fall onto the palace of King Ja. The Anuyoga tantras will emerge in the forests of Siṭghala.

While the identity of this figure is obscure—he has been conflated with Indrabhūti the Great, his son, or even a later Indrabhūti contemporaneous with Kukkurāja, Kambalapāda, Saroruha, and Jālandharīpā—the tradition clearly recounts that:

While the king was sitting absorbed in the meditative cultivation of the yoga of the lower tantras, a volume containing the Mahāyoga tantras, including the Buddhasamāyoga (T. 366-367) and an image of their compiler Guhyapati Vajrapāṇi, reportedly fell upon the royal palace, just as in his

dream. Then, having performed prayers, he intuitively understood the chapter entitled the "Vision of Vajrasattva" and practised meditation for seven months, relying on that and on the image of Vajrapāṇi. As a result he had a vision of Vajrasattva and received from him the empowerment of pristine cognition. Thus, he came to understand the symbolic conventions and meanings of that volume in their entirety.

King Ja first taught these tantras to Uparāja, a renowned scholar of Sahor, but without success. He then taught the master Kukkurāja, who intuitively understood the chapter on the "Vision of Vajrasattva" derived from the *Eightfold Division of the Magical Net of Vajrasattva* (rDor sems sgyu 'phrul sde brgyad, Tingkye vol. 14), now contained in the Eighty-chapter Tantra from the Magical Net (brGyad bcu pa, Ch. 74), and received a prediction that Guhyapati Vajrapāṇi would subsequently reveal the meanings of this tantra. Accordingly Kukkurāja is said to have been empowered by Guhyapati and verbally instructed by Licchavi Vimalakīrti. He then divided the Mahāyoga texts into the eighteen great tantrapīāaka and taught them to King Ja. The latter composed a number of commentaries on the Guhyagarbha including the extant treatises entitled *Array of the Path of the Magical Net* (sGyu 'phrul lam rnam bkod, P.4737, NK Vol. 81) and *Instruction on the Two Stages of the Guhyagarbha* (śrīguhyagarbhakramadvayoddeśa, P. 4771, NK Vol. 81) which are both connected with the Māyājāla cycle. He himself says in the former:

In the eastern domain of Indrabhūti,  
At Vajrakuāa, in India,  
I, the noble Indrabhūti,  
Practised the Magical Net,  
Having been taught by the Lord of Secrets, himself.  
I actually realised Vajrapāṇi,  
With his retinue of fifty thousand.  
Being empowered in wholesome action,  
By the practice of disciplined conduct,  
I was free from sin, and reached [an exalted] level.

Kukkurāja, known as the "king of dogs" because he reputedly taught the doctrine by day in the guise of a dog to a thousand spiritual warriors and yoginīs, and by night went to the charnel grounds with them to perform

feast-offerings and other sacramental practices, proceeded to Oḍḍiyāna where he gave a detailed explanation of the five inner tantrapiāaka of Mahāyoga, including the Buddhasamāyoga (T. 366-367), on which he had composed treatises such as the èadguhyārthadharavyūha (T. 1664-1669), and the Sarvamaṇḍalānuvartipañcavidhi (T.1670). He transmitted the eighteen tantrapiāaka of Mahāyoga to śakraputra, or Indrabhūti the younger, who was the king's son; he to Siṃharāja; he to śakrabhūti, or Uparāja; and finally to the daughter Gomadevī. As is said in the *Sequence of the Path of the Magical Net* (Māyājālapathakrama, P. 4736):

Then, to the east of Jambudvīpa,  
Which rests on the Indestructible Seat,  
In a holy palace of precious gems,  
In an auspicious and sacred room,  
Kukkurāja and Indrabhūti,  
Together with Siṃharāja, Uparāja,  
Daughter Gomadevī, and others,  
Received the empowerment of the Magical Net.  
They actually attained the maṇḍala as an assembly;  
And manifestly reached the level of Vajradhara.

Our sources recount that the lineage then descended to Vilāsavajra and Buddhaguhya.

## VILĀSAVAJRA

The master Vilāsavajra, also known as Līlāvajra, was born in èaṃḥara and ordained as a monk in Oḍḍiyāna, where he studied the tripiāaka and became particularly learned in the philosophical tenets of Asaṭga, the ordinary sciences, and all the tantrapiāakas, the Magical Net in particular. On an island in Oḍḍiyāna called Madhima he practised and became accomplished in the Tantra of Mañjuśrī from the Magical Net ('Jam dpal sgyu 'phrul drva ba, Tingkye vol. 15), otherwise known in its later translation as the *Litany of the Names of Mañjuśrī* (Mañjuśrīnāmasaṭgīti, T. 360). During his ten years at Nālandā, he composed many treatises and expounded them in detail. Those that are still extant, concerning the Magical Net include: a *Commentary on the Litany of the Names of Mañjuśrī* ('Jam dpal mtshan brjod kyi 'grel ba, T. 2533) according to the

interpretations of the *Unsurpassed Yogatantra*; the *sPar khab Commentary on the Secret Nucleus* (śrīguhyagarbhaāīkā, P. 4718, NK Vol. 63); the Innermost Point (Cittabindu, P. 4723, NK Vol. 81); the Sixfold Sequence (Kramaḥaāka, P. 4741, NK Vol. 81); the Clarification of Commitments (Samayacitraprakāśa, P. 4744, NK Vol. 89); and the Propensity for the Commitments (Samayānuśayanirdeśa, P. 4745, NK Vol. 89). Among the students of Vilāsavajra, the most prominent were Buddhaguhya and Buddhajñānapāda, who both studied the Magical Net cycle.

## BUDDHAGUHYA

The master Buddhaguhya, a native of Central India, was ordained at Nālandā, where he and master Buddhaśānti were both disciples of Buddhajñānapāda during the early part of the latter's life. On attaining spiritual accomplishment through Mañjuśrī, he travelled to Oḍḍiyāna, where he met Vilāsavajra, and studied the Yogatantras, the Five Inner Unsurpassed Tantrapīāka, and the Magical Net in particular. He composed a great many works, including the following which are extant: the *Analytical Commentary on the Tantra of the Secret Nucleus* (gSang ba'i snying po la 'grel ba rnam bshad/ rnam dbye kyi 'grel, NK Vol. 80); the *Sequence of Indestructible Activity* (Māyājālavajrakarmakrama, P. 4720, NK Vol. 80); the *Significance of the Maṇḍala Doctrine* (Dharmamaṇḍalasūtra, T. 3705, NK Vol. 80); the *Holy Ornament of the Appearance of the Real* (Tattvālokaparamālaṃkāra, P. 4735, NK Vol. 82); the *Lesser Net* (Sūkhmajāla, P. 4734, NK Vol. 80) and the *Greater Net* (drva chen, P. 4733, NK Vol. 80); the *Greater Sequence of the Path* (Māyā-jālapathakrama, P. 4736, NK Vol. 83) and the *Lesser Sequence of the Path* (sGyu 'phrul lam gyi rnam bshad chung ba, NK Vol. 81, Dz. Vol. 1); as well as treatises on other tantras.

## PADMASAMBHAVA

Another lineage of the Mahāyoga tantras also passed from King Ja and Kukkurāja through Sukhasidhi (Garab Dorje) to Vajrahāsyā and thence to Prabhāhasti of Sahor. Garab Dorje and Vajrahāsyā are recognized as the authors of the short *Lamp of the View entitled Determination and Distinction* (La shan lta ba'i sgron ma, P. 4727, NK Vol. 80). Prabhāhasti was a principle teacher of Padmasambhava, who also received the Magical Net cycle

directly from Buddhaguhya. Padmasambhava composed the *Great Exegesis of the Guhyagarbha Tantra* (sGyu 'phrul rnam bshad chen mo), the *Precious Garland Commentary on the Sequence of the Path of Secret Mantra* (gSang sngags lam rim 'grel pa rin chen phreng ba, NK Vol. 82), and the *Precious Blazing Lamp of Sun and Moon: a Commentary on the Litany of the Names of Mañjuśrī* ('Jam dpal sgyu 'phrul drva ba'i 'grel pa rin po che nyi zla 'bar ba'i sgron ma, NK. Vol. 60), among other works, and in Tibet he also taught his autocommentary on Chapter Thirteen of the Guhyagarbha Tantra, entitled *Garland of Views, a Collection of Esoteric Instructions* (Man ngag lta phreng, P. 4726, NK Vol. 88) to King Trisong Detsen and his subjects.

## VIMALAMITRA

A native of Hastivana in western India, Vimalamitra mastered the sciences and their branches, the sūtras of the lesser and greater vehicles, and the tantras under many masters including Buddhaguhya. He was particularly learned in the Magical Net cycle; and he composed many treatises, for instance: the commentary on the Guhyagarbha entitled *An Illuminating Lamp on the Fundamental Text* (sGyu 'phrul man ngag khog gzhung gsal ba'i sgron me, P. 4739, NK Vol. 80); the *Removal of Darkness: A Commentary on the Tantra of the Supreme Spiritual Teacher, from the Magical Net* (sGyu 'phrul bla ma'i 'grel ba mun sel); the *Eye-opening Commentary on the Tantra of Supplementary Points, from the Magical Net* (Vajrasattvamāyājālatantraśrīguhyagarbhanāma-cakḥuḥāikā, P. 4756); the *Abridged Commentary on the Eighty-Chapter Tantra from the Magical Net* (brGyad bcu pa'i bsdus 'grel); *Opening the Eye of Discriminative Awareness* (Mahāyogaprajñāpraveśacakḥurupadeśanāma, P. 4725); the *Three Stages* (Māyājālopadeśakramatraya, P. 4742, NK Vol. 81); *Meditative Absorption in the Mudrās* (Māyājālamudrādhyāna, P. 4732, NK Vol. 82); a *Ritual for Burnt Offerings* (Māyājālahomasamkḥiptakrama, P. 4746, NL Vol. 80); the *Garland of Cremation Rituals according to the Magical Net* (Māyājālaśavasamskārakarmāvali, P. 4747, NK Vol. 80); *Ritual Geometry* (Thig rim, NK Vol. 81); and the *Short Commentary on the Guhyagarbha* (Guhyagarbhapiṇḍārtha, P. 4755, NK Vol. 80).

## Extant Indian Commentaries

The extant Indian commentaries on the cycle of the Magical Net, including the above, are preserved in the Peking edition of the Tengyur, vols. 82-83, and in the Collected Transmitted Precepts of the Nyingmapa (rNying ma'i bka' ma), Vols. 60, 63-65, 80-83, and 87-89. According to Lochen Dharmaśrī's *Oral Transmission of the Lord of Secrets* (gSang bdag zhal lung, pp. 107 ff.), they are divided between general exegetical tracts (spyi'i don bshad pa) such as Vilāsavajra's *Innermost Point* (Cittabindu, P. 4723, NK Vol. 81) and Vimalamitra's *An Illuminating Lamp of the Fundamental Text* (sGyu 'phrul man ngag khog gzhung gsal ba'i sgron me, P. 4739, NK Vol. 80), and specific textual commentaries ('grel pa). The latter include commentaries on the root tantra (rtsa 'grel) and commentaries on the various exegetical tantras (bshad 'grel).

The first group comprises the great Indian treatises on the Guhyagarbha Tantra itself, i.e., Vilāsavajra's *sPar khab Commentary* ('Grel pa spar khab, P. 4718, NK Vol. 63), Sūryaprabhāsiṃha's *Great Commentary* (rGya cher 'grel ba, P. 4719, NK Vol. 64), Buddhaguhya's *Analytical Commentary* (rNam dbye 'grel), Padmasambhava's *Great Exposition* (rNam bshad chen mo), and Vimalamitra's *Short Commentary* ('Grel chung piṇḍārtha, P. 4755, NK Vol. 80).

The second includes commentaries on the other texts of the cycle such as Vimalamitra's *Removal of Darkness: A Commentary on the Tantra of the Supreme Spiritual Teacher, from the Magical Net* (sGyu 'phrul bla ma'i 'grel ba mun sel), his *Eye-opening Commentary on the Tantra of Supplementary Points, from the Magical Net* (Vajrasattvamāyājālatantra-śrīguhyagarbhanāmacakṣuḥāikā, P. 4756), and his *Abridged Commentary on the Eighty-Chapter Tantra, from the Magical Net* (brGyad bcu pa'i bsdus 'grel).

In addition, each of the aforementioned "ten aspects of mantra" (mantradaśatattva), which form the subject-matter of tantra-texts in general, and in this case, of the Guhyagarbha Tantra itself, has its own commentarial literature:

### 1. View (lta ba)

Commentaries on the view of the Guhyagarbha include: Garab Dorje and Vajrahāsyā's *Lamp of the View entitled Determination and Distinction* (La shan lta ba'i sgron ma, P. 4727, NK Vol. 80), Padmasambhava's *Garland of Views: a Collection of Esoteric Instructions* (Man ngag lta phreng, P. 4726, NK Vol. 88), Vimalamitra's *Opening the Eye of Discriminative Awareness* (Mahāyogaprajñā-praveśacakṣurupadeśanāma, P. 4725), Nāgārjuna's *Turquoise Display* (gYu thang ma kras dgu, P. 4729, NK Vol. 80), and Kawa Paltsek's indigenous Tibetan treatise *Seventeenfold Appearance of the Sequence of the View* (lTa rim snang ba bcu bdun pa, P. 4728).

## 2. Conduct (spyod pa)

Lochen Dharmaśrī mentions the *Lamp which Subsumes Conduct* (sPyod bsdus sgron ma, P. 5357?), and the *Indestructible Lord Mañjuśrī* (rDo rje 'jam mgon) as typical commentaries of Indian origin expounding conduct.

## 3. Maṇḍala (dkyil 'khor)

Focussing on the maṇḍala of the Guhyagarbha Tantra are Buddhaguhya's *Sequence of Indestructible Activity* (Māyājālavajrakarmakrama, P. 4720, NK Vol. 80), the *Significance of the Maṇḍala Doctrine* (Dharmamaṇḍalasūtra, T. 3705, NK Vol. 80), and the *Threefold Treatise on Ritual Geometry* (Thig gsum , P. 4738, NK Vol. 81), authorship of which is attributed jointly to Vimalamitra, Vilāsavajra, and Buddhaguhya

## 4. Empowerment (dbang)

Those commentaries which focus on the empowerments of the Guhyagarbha Tantra include Buddhaguhya's *Sequence of Indestructible Activity concerning the Maṇḍala of Empowerments associated with the Wrathful Deities of the Magical Net* (Krodhamāyābhiṣekhamāṇḍalavajrakarmāvali, P. 4761, NK Vol. 80), along with his *Ascertainment of the Meaning of Empowerment* (Abhiṣekhārthanirbheda, P. 4722, NK Vol. 80), the *Necessity of the Empowerments of the Magical Net of Vajrasattva* (Vajrasattvamāyājālābhiṣekāvaśyaka, P.4721), and its autocommentary (Māy-ābhiṣekāvaśyakamūlavōtti, P. 4762), as well as the aforementioned *Threefold Treatise on Ritual Geometry* (Thig gsum, P. 4738, NK Vol. 81).

## 5. Commitment (dam tshig)

The principle commentaries focussing on commitments are both composed by Vilāsavajra, namely, the *Clarification of Commitments* (Samayacitraprakāśa, P. 4744, NK Vol. 89); and the *Propensity for the Commitments* (Samay-ānuśayanirdeśa, P. 4745, NK Vol. 89).

## 6. Activity (phrin las)

Those treatises concerned with ritual activities include Vimalamitra's *Ritual for Burnt Offerings* (Māyājālahomasamṅkṣiptakrama, P. 4746, NK Vol. 81); along with his *Garland of Cremation Rituals according to the Magical Net* (Māyājāla-śavasamṅskārakarmāvali, P. 4747, NK Vol. 81), the *Garland of Ritual Concerning Funerary Relics* (Kulyakarmāvali, P. 4749, NK Vol. 81), and Vilāsavajra's *Cremation Ritual according to the Magical Net* (Māyājālalaghudōhānta-svāśrayakrama, P. 4748, NK Vol. 81).

## 7. Attainment (sgrub pa)

Treatises focussing on spiritual attainment include: Indrabhūti's *Array of the Path of the Magical Net* (sGyu 'phrul lam rnam bkod, P. 4737, NK Vol. 81), and *Instruction on the Two Stages of the Guhyagarbha* (śrīguhyagarbhakramadvayoddeśa, P. 4771, NK Vol. 81); Buddhaguhya's *Greater Sequence of the Path* (Māyājālapathakrama, P. 4736, NK Vol. 83), the *Lesser Sequence of the Path* (sGyu 'phrul lam gyi rnam bshad chung ba, NK Vol. 81, Dz. Vol. 1); the *Lesser Net* (Sūkhmajāla, P. 4734), and the *Holy Ornament of the Appearance of the Real* (Tattvālokaparamālaṃkāra, P. 4735, NK Vol. 82); Vilāsavajra's *Sixfold Sequence* (Kramaḥaāka, P. 4741, NK Vol. 81); and Vimalamitra's *Three Stages* (Māyājālopadeśa-kramatraya, P. 4742, NK Vol. 81), along with his *Sequence of the Radiance of the Magical Net of Vajrasattva* (Vajrasattvamāyājālaprabhākrama, P. 4731), and the *Manifest Perfection of the Precious Net* (Ratnajālābhisampatti, P. 4733).

## 8. Meditative stability (ting nge 'dzin)

Treatises focussing on meditative stability include Vimalamitra's *Meditative Absorption in the Mudrās* (Māyājālamudrādhyāna, P. 4732, NK Vol. 82),

along with his *Single Seal of the Wrathful Deities* (Khro bo phyag rgya gcig pa, P. 4779), and the *Meditative Absorption in the Four Seals* (Caturmudrādhyanā/rTse gcig bsdus pa phyag rgya bzhi pa'i bsam gtan, P. 4778, NK Vol. 82).

## 9. Offering (mchod pa)

Treatises on the subject of offerings include Padmasambhava's Advice concerning Torma-offerings (Odanasambhārabyādeśa/ Za tshogs, P. 4750), as well as his Cremation Rite (Dur khrod), the Small Torma-offering of Bliss (bDe ba gtor chung), the Greater Burnt Offering (Ho chen), the Lesser Burnt Offering (Ho chung), and the Greater and Lesser Ritual Offerings of Consecrated Grain (gYos yig che chung). Also included in this section are Vimalamitra's Inestimable Supreme Skilful Means (Thabs mchog dpag gi mi lang ba), and his Treasure Lamp (dByig gi sgron ma).

## 10. Mantra & Seal (sngags dang phyag rgya)

The treatises concerning mantra recitation and the hand-gestures that seal the visualisation securely are referred to by Lochen Dharmaśrī under the collective heading Eight Arisings of Enlightened Activity (Phrin las shar ba brgyad), which implies that they concern the generation of the peaceful and wrathful deities (zhi khro gnyis), the making of assembled offerings (tshogs ma bu gnyis), the conferral of empowerments and their integration (dbang bsre ba gnyis), and the application of cremation rites and burnt offerings (ro sreg dang sbyin sreg gnyis).

## 11. PROPAGATION AND TRANSLATION OF THE MĀYĀJĀLA CYCLE IN TIBET

Rigdzin Jigme Lingpa, in his *Catalogue to the Collected Tantras of the Nyingmapa*, p. 464, 1-3, states that the Guhyagarbha Tantra was definitively translated by Vimalamitra, Nyak Jñānakumāra and Ma Rinchen Chok. Previously, it had been translated by Buddhaguhya and Vairocana, and in an intervening period by Padmasambhava and Nyak Jñānakumāra. The sequence of these events can be outlined as follows:

At Mount Kailash, Buddhaguhya instructed Be Jampal and Branka Mukti

among others on texts belonging to the Guhyagarbha cycle, including Indrabhūti's *Array of the Path of the Magical Net* (sGyu 'phrul rnam par bkod pa, P. 4737, NK Vol. 81). In collaboration with Vairocana, he made the earliest translation of the root-tantra.

Padmasambhava instructed Nyak Jñānakumāra in the Guhyagarbha and in his own *Garland of Views: A Collection of Esoteric Instructions* (Man ngag lta phreng, P. 4726, NK Vol. 88). Together they made the intermediate translation. Jñānakumāra instructed the Sogdian Pelgyi Yeshe; and, with Zhang Gyelwei Yonten, he in turn instructed Nub Sangye Yeshe.

Vimalamitra then expounded the Eight Sections of the Magical Net of Vajrasattva (sGyu 'phrul sde brgyad, Tingkye Vols. 14-15), including the Guhyagarbha Tantra, which is the root of the Eighteen Great Tantrapiāaka. He expounded them to Ma Rinchen Chok, and translated them with the latter's assistance, and that of Nyak Jñānakumāra. Their version is therefore the latest of the three, and it is known as the basic translation.

Later, the manuscript was translated by Tharlo Nyima Gyeltshan and Go Lotsāwa Zhonupel. Their version is called the "creative translation" (rtsal 'gyur) because they had no supervising paṇḍita. Two additional chapters, either a twenty-first and twenty-second, or a twenty-third and twenty-fourth, were also reputedly translated by Tharlo in accordance with the rediscovered Sanskrit manuscript.

Longchen Rabjampa (1308-1363), having examined the extant Tibetan versions of the Guhyagarbha Tantra in great detail, has made the following observation in his *Dispelling the Darkness of the Ten Directions* (Phyogs bcu mun sel) concerning certain verses which are reputed to be interpolations:

Now, certain persons hold that these interpolated passages were [originally] absent in this root-tantra but that they were extracted from other texts in the cycle of the Magical Net and inserted into their respective chapters by Ma Rinchen Chok, and that [the versions of the text] were [subsequently] divided by Tsugrum Rinchen Zhonnu into those which have the interpolations and those which do not.

Again, there are some who hold that the version without the interpolated

verses was translated by Nyak Jñānakumāra, and that the version including interpolations had them inserted into the translation by Ma Rinchen Chok. There are even some who say that Ma himself embedded them in the text out of envy at Lasum Gyelwa Jangchub. But the truth of the matter is that the interpolations are lacking in both the earliest translation made by Buddhaguhya and Vairocana and in the intermediate translation which was made by Padmasambhava and Nyak Jñānakumāra. They are present in the later translation which was made by Vimalamitra, Nyak Jñānakumāra and Ma Rinchen Chok. Therefore it is clear that the Sanskrit manuscripts themselves had a number of redactions. Should anyone wish to know that this is the case, the *Transcendental Perfection of Discriminative Awareness in Eight Thousand Lines* (T. 8) itself had a number of manuscripts, extant in the three redactions of the parivrājakas gZö-sbyangs, 'Phreng-ba-can, and sDe-can; and in the case of certain other texts such as the Sitātapatrā (T. 3083, 592) a number of redactions are similarly found. Therefore it is not certain that these [variant passages] were inserted by the Tibetans. One should know that the discrepancies in the translations of this tantra were to be found in the original Sanskrit manuscripts. Numerous redactions of Sanskrit manuscripts occur because there is a distinction between those [versions] in which the meaning is clearly expressed and those in which it is not.

Ma Rinchen Chok instructed Tsugru Rinchen Zhonu and Kye-re Chokyong, who both instructed Zhang Gyelwei Yonten and Dar-je Pelgyi Drakpa. The former taught this tantra many times in Central Tibet, Tsang, and Kham, and the lineages descended from him became known as "the transmitted precepts of Chimphu", or as "the lineage of esoteric instructions".

## 12. THE BKA' MA LINEAGE

The succession known in Tibet as the "distant lineage of transmitted precepts" (ring brgyud bka' ma) incorporates all those texts and instructions of Mahāyoga, Anuyoga and Atiyoga which were introduced from India and gradually passed down in an oral and literary tradition. It is contrasted with the "close lineage of treasures" (nye brgyud gter ma) that comprises those cycles discovered anew in each successive generation. This "distant lineage" is identified pre-eminently by its synthesis of Mahāyoga,

Anuyoga, and Atiyoga, named mdo sgyu sems gsum after the titles of the principal text of each— the Magical Net (sgyu), the Sūtra Which Gathers All Intentions (mdo) and the All Accomplishing King (sems) which represents the Mental Class (sems sde) of Atiyoga. This common heritage of all the Nyingmapa lineages in Tibet fell first to Nyak Jñānakumāra, secondly to Nub Sangye Yeshe and finally to the Zur family.

## NYAK JÑĀNAKUMĀRA

Nyak Jñānakumāra was fully ordained by śāntarakṣita and he became a celebrated adept of the meditational deities Vajrāmōta and Vajrakīla. He followed the most learned and accomplished masters of India, and acquired great learning in grammar, logic, dialectics, and in the outer and inner mantra-texts. Nyak translated many sūtras and tantras, becoming the confluence of the "four great rivers of the distant lineage" which derived from the teachings of Padmasambhava, Vimalamitra, Vairocana and Yudra Nyingpo. In particular, he mastered the mdo sgyu sems gsum, and composed the *Nine Cycles of the Emanational Mirror* ('Phrul gyi me long dgu skor, NK Vol 82), Through his interpretations and expositions, he transmitted the Magical Net to numerous students. The foremost were known as the "eight glorious adepts of Vajrakīla", namely, his four earlier disciples — the Sogdian Pelgyi Yeshe, Odren Pelgyi Zhonu, Nyenchen Pelyang, and Thagzang Pelgyi Dorje — and his four later disciples — Lamchok Pelgyi Dorje, Dar-je Pelgyi Drakpa, Dra Pelgyi Nyingpo, and Lhalung Pelgyi Dorje.

## NUBCHEN SANGYE YESHE

Nubchen Sangye Yeshe, a native of Drak, was empowered and accomplished in the maṇḍala of Mañjuśrī. He studied many outer and inner tantras including the Guhyagarbha and their esoteric instructions under Padmasambhava, śrīsiṃha, Vimalamitra, Vasudhara and Kamalaśīla, as well as under the Tibetan translator Nyak Jñānakumāra, Sogpo Pelgyi Yeshe and Zhang Gyelwei Yonten in particular. His compositions include:

- the *Armour against Darkness*, which is a vast commentary on the Sūtra Which Gathers All Intentions (mDo'i 'grel chen mun pa'i go cha, NK Vols. 93-94)

- the *Disputant's Sword Which Cuts Through Difficulties* (dka' gcod smra ba'i mtshon cha)
- the *Commentary on the Realisation of the Eighty-Chapter Magical Net* (sGyu 'phrul brgyad cu pa'i mngon rtogs 'grel)
- the *Lamp for the Eye of Meditative Stability*— which is an esoteric instruction of the Great Perfection (rDzogs chen gyi man ngag bsam gtan mig sgron, NK Vol. 104).

Nubchen's most authentic student was Khulung Yonten Gyatso, who received all his empowerments, tantrtras, and esoteric instructions, and passed the lineage on through: Yeshe Gyatso and Pema Wangyal (his sons), Lharje Hūmchung (the former's son), Nyang Sherab Chok, and Nyang Yeshe Jungne of Cholung, from whom it descended to Zurpoche śākya Jungne.

This lineal descent is known as the tradition of Rong, or else the tradition of Nyang, after their clan name. Before considering the importance of the Zur family which maintained this "distant lineage" down to the seventeenth century it is appropriate to examine the role of Rongzom Paṇḍita, who was a contemporary of Zurpoche Śākya Jungne, and that of Longchen Rabjampa in relation to the Guhyagarbha Tantra.

## RONGZOM PAṆḌITA CHOKYI ZANGPO

Chokyi Zangpo of Rong, the illustrious eleventh century mahāpaṇḍita of the Nyingma school, was a native of Narlungrong, Rulak, in lower Tsang. He received the lineage of the instructions of Padmasambhava, which had been transmitted successively from the latter through: Nanam Dorje Dudjom, Kharchen Pelgyi Wangchuk, Dra Dorje Zhonu, Zhangzhang Yonten Drak, and Rongben Yonten, to his own father Rongben Tshultim Rinpoche.

In his youth, while studying the ancient translations under one Doton Senge, he once dreamed that he was eating a porridge he had prepared of the Guhyagarbha, with a vegetable broth made of the Buddhasamāyoga. He told this to his mentor, who said, "How wonderful! It is a sign that you have completely internalised those doctrines. You should compose a commentary on each." Among his compositions therefore was the first

major Tibetan commentary on the Guhyagarbha (gSang snying 'grel pa)—the *Precious Jewel Commentary* (dKon mchog 'grel, NK Vol. 67), so called because of its introductory words which say:

The nature of the Three Precious Jewels  
Is enlightened mind.

This commentary and Longchenpa's *Dispelling the Darkness of the Ten Directions* (Phyogs bcu mun sel, NK Vol. 68) are regarded as the two major expositions of the tantra according to the Atiyoga standpoint, in contrast to those of the "distant lineage" which emphasise the Mahāyoga position. Dudjom Rinpoche says of these:

The commentary by the great, all-knowing Longchenpa, entitled *Dispelling the Darkness of the Ten Directions* (Phyogs bcu mun sel) clearly elucidates [the Guhyagarbha], commenting on it according to the tradition of the "king of vehicles" [i.e. Atiyoga]. On the other hand, this commentary by the all-knowing Rongzompa appears like a great chest that is sealed tight, vastly commenting on the expanse of reality. Knowing that these two are the main Tibetan commentaries on the Guhyagarbha provides the intellect with the potential for great power.

Rongzompa's role as the first major Tibetan commentator was criticised by scholars from the four Tibetan provinces, including the noted opponent of the Nyingma tantras Go Khugpa Lhe-tse, but he is reported to have subdued these critics in debate. One could argue that Rongzompa merely revived the commentarial tradition established in Tibet by Kawa Paltsek, Nyen Pelyang, and Nubchen Sangye Yeshe prior to the later dissemination of the teaching. Yet, despite the novelty of indigenous composition in the eleventh century, his critics in fact found that he adhered to the scriptural authorities, could bear logical examination, and that he contradicted neither syllogistic proof nor the teachings of their mentors. Concerning this controversy, Dudjom Rinpoche adds:

This reasoned argument appears to be a learned axiom, when scrutinised fairly. In general, a doctrine is no more important merely because it originated in India. A distinction of good and bad treatises on the basis of country is not known in learned circles. If the author was one who abided

on the level of spiritual accomplishment, the treatises composed by him should be valid. So, it is proven that whether they originated in India or Tibet makes no difference. Sometimes, too, Tibetan treatises are better than Indian treatises. One should regard as reliable those composed by accomplished Tibetans, whose pristine cognition was manifest, rather than those written by ordinary Indian scholars, who based themselves on learning in grammar and logic.

## LONGCHEN RABJAMPA

Longchen Rabjampa (1308-1363), a native of Nganlam in Dranang, is renowned without doubt as the greatest philosopher within the Nyingmapa tradition. He studied the *mdo sgyu sems gsum* and the Collected Tantras of the Nyingmapa under four teachers, including Den Phakpa, Zhonu Dondub, and Nyotingmawa Sangye Drakpa. His biography is presented in some detail by Dudjom Rinpoche in *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism*. Among his many compositions which firmly established the terminology of the Great Perfection system, there is an interpretation of the Guhyagarbha Tantra from the Atiyoga perspective, entitled the *Trilogy Which Dispels Darkness* (Mun sel skor gsum). This work comprises the abridgement *Dispelling the Darkness of Ignorance* (bsDus don ma rig mun pa sel ba, NK Vol. 69), which in fourteen folios provides an analysis of the chapter-divisions of the Guhyagarbha, the summary *Dispelling Mental Darkness* (sPyi don yid kyi mun pa sel ba, NK Vol. 69), which in eighty-nine folios analyses the scope and structure of the Buddhist and non-Buddhist teachings, and the interlinear commentary *Dispelling the Darkness of the Ten Directions* (gZhung don phyogs bcu'i mun pa sel ba, NK Vol. 68), which in three hundred and thirteen folios provides both general introductory explanations of each section of the Guhyagarbha and a detailed interlinear commentary of its "vajra-verses" (rdo rje'i tshig, Skt. vajrapāda). The translation of the Guhyagarbha contained in the present volume is based on and accompanied by a full translation of this interlinear commentary.

## THE ZUR FAMILY

Zurpoche śākya Junge, a native of Yardzong or Sarmo in Dokham, received the three stages of monastic ordination from Lachen Gongpa Rabsel, and

under his grandfather, Rinchen Gyatso, he studied the sūtra and tantra-texts, including the cycle of the Magical Net (Tingkye Vols. 14-16). Later, he received instruction on the Magical Net and the Mental Class (sems sde) from Nyang Yeshe Jungne of Cholung, on the Sūtra Which Gathers All Intentions (mDo dgongs pa 'dus pa), the sPar khab Commentary ('grel pa spar khab) and the Great Perfection from Namkade; and on the Sequence of the Path of the Magical Net (Māyājālapathakrama, P. 4736) from Dre Trochung of upper Nyang. Zurpoche is known to have amassed at his Ugpalung monastery the root tantras and exegetical tantras; the root-texts and their commentaries; the tantras and their means for attainment; and he applied them in practice.

Foremost among his disciples were the four "summits":

- Zurchung Sherab Drak, who had arrived at the summit of the view, and enlightened intention
- Menyak Khyungdrak, who had arrived at the summit of the exegesis of the Guhyagarbha
- Zhang Gochung, who had arrived at the summit of vast knowledge
- Zanggom Sherab Gyelpo, who had arrived at the summit of meditative practice

Zurpoche inhabited Ugpalung in the lower Shang valley for many years, and he constructed a temple in that place, where he had visions of the Forty-two Peaceful Deities and of the Fifty-eight Wrathful Deities, according to the Guhyagarbha. As he himself said:

"I perceive all the earth, stones, mountains and rocks of Ugpalung to be the host of peaceful and wrathful deities. But in particular, I always see this southern peak of Ensermo as the Buddhas of the Five Enlightened Families. Therefore, I shall build a temple of the peaceful deities."

Since in the past, the accomplished masters were completely mindful of preserving secrecy, Zurpoche said that it was improper to make images according to the secret means for attainment in places where many people would congregate, and commissioned images according to the tradition of the tantras. The frescoes painted to the right were of the peaceful deities of the Magical Net, and those on the left were of the blazing wrathful deities.

His main student and nephew, Zurchungpa Sherab Drak (1014-1074) mastered and widely propagated the "distant lineage", including the Guhyagarbha Tantra. Foremost among his students were the "four pillars": Kyoton śāk-ye of Gungbu who was the pillar of the Mental Class; Yangkheng Lama of Kyonglung who was the pillar of the Sūtra Which Gathers All Intentions (mDo dgongs pa 'dus pa); Len śākya Zangpo of Chubar who was the pillar of the Magical Net; and Datik Jośāk of Nagmore who was the pillar of ritual and means for attainment.

However, it was Zurchungpa's actual son, Zur Drophukpa śākya Senge (b. 1074) who widely disseminated the Guhyagarbha Tantra in Tibet. He began his study of this text in his fifteenth year under Lan śākya Zangpo of Chubar, and received the entire exegetical tradition of the Zur family from the other three main students of Zurchungpa, who all were invited to his residence. His spiritual accomplishment in the Guhyagarbha is illustrated by the following incident:

Once, when he was teaching the sacred doctrine in Drophuk, he sat on a backless teaching-throne, and students surrounded him on all sides. He appeared to be facing his audience in all directions. Therefore, they were convinced that he was actually the representative of the lord of the maṇḍala of the Magical Net of Vajrasattva (Tingkye Vols. 14-16) and he became renowned as an undisputed emanation.

Despite the recent criticisms of Lha Lama Yeshe-o and Go Khugpa Lhe-tse, Drophukpa could reportedly gather five hundred literate students during the summer and winter and three hundred during the autumn and spring. Owing to his mastery of this tantra, the two mainstream lineages diverged from him, i.e., the Zur lineage of Central Tibet and the Kham lineage of Eastern Tibet.

### 13. THE ZUR LINEAGE IN CENTRAL TIBET

In Central Tibet, Zur Drophukpa's principle disciples were known as the four "black ones"; the four "teachers"; and the four "grandfathers". The four "black ones" (nag po, so-called because their names all contained the element nag, "black") included Cheton Gyanak of Upper Nyang, the main lineage-holder of the Central or "Upper Zur Tradition".

## FROM CHETON GYANAK TO TATON ZIJI

Gyanak studied under Droghukpa from the age of thirty for eleven years, and owing to his intellectual abilities and devotion, Droghukpa bestowed upon him the fundamental texts and practical instructions for Mahāyoga, Anuyoga and Atiyoga. For this reason, he became the most complete lineage-holder of the Zurs. His many students included Upa Tonśāk, Upa Zhigpo, and his own nephew, Yonten Zung (b. 1126) who studied the three classes of inner tantra under him for thirteen years. The lineage therefore descended from Yonten Zung and Upa Zhigpo through Zhigpo Dudtsi to Taton Jo-ye (compiler of the former's teachings), and Taton Ziji (compiler of the biographies of this lineage).

Taton Ziji composed his own extensive commentary on the Guhyagarbha Tantra, which is no longer extant, and he acted as an important intermediary between the Kashmiri master śākyaśrī who rediscovered the long lost Sanskrit manuscript of the Guhyagarbha at Samye and those scholars who prepared the later "creative translation".

## MENLUNGPA MIKYO DORJE

Menlungpa Mikyo Dorje was born during the latter part of the 13th century in Chongye, as the son of Nyangton Chenpo. As such he was a contemporary of Zhigpo Dudtsi, and the seniormost disciple of the great treasure-finder Guru Chowang (1212-70). He is known to have constructed the temple above the tumulus of King Songtsen Gampo, one chapel of which can still be seen at Chongye. Among his compositions is the Commentary on the Secret Nucleus entitled Ascertainment of the Tantra's Meaning (gSang snying 'grel rgyud don rnam nges, NK. Vol. 71). With the exception of Rongzompa's Precious Jewel Commentary (dKon mchog 'grel, NK Vol. 67), this text appears to be the oldest extant long commentary on the Guhyagarbha of indigenous Tibetan composition. Along with it, Menlungpa composed the Synopsis of the Guhyagarbha entitled Infinite Light Rays (gSang snying bsdud don 'od zer mtha' yas, NK Vol. 71) and a short introductory tract (gSang sying spyi don, NK Vol 71).

## ZUR JAMPA SENGE

Yungtonpa Dorjepel, in his own Commentary on the Guhyagarbha (NK Vol. 70), offers an alternative lineage of transmission derived from Zur Drophukpa, based on the exegesis of the sPar khab Commentary (Guhyagarbha-mahātantrarājaāikā, P. 4718, NK Vol. 63), which he outlines as follows: Drophukpa, Yington of Tsang and Nyeton Chokyi Senge of Gongdring, Tsangnak Obar, Meton Gonpo, Lama Srong, Pakshi śākya-o, Tanak Dudul, and Da' śākya 'Phel, who in turn taught Zur Jampa Senge.

Zur Jampa Senge was the son of Zur Nyima Senge and great grandson of Pakshi śākya-o. In his fifteenth year, at Ugpalung, he studied the Guhyagarbha Tantra under Da śākyapel, and then, in his seventeenth year, he composed a Definitive Presentation of the Tantras (rGyud kyi rnam bzhag). He subsequently received the Sequence of the Path of the Magical Net (Māyājālapathakrama, P. 4736, NK Vol. 83) and teachings on the Great Perfection from Cheton Drubpabum, the empowerments of beneficence, ability, and profundity according to the Zur tradition of the Magical Net (sGyu 'phrul zur lugs kyi phan nus zab gsum gyi dbang, NK Vol 13) from Taton Ziji of Lato, and many other teachings. Jampa Senge himself had numerous disciples, including sixteen who had mastered the Sequence of the Path of the Magical Net, the Guhyagarbha Tantra and its sPar khab Commentary (Guhyagarbhamahātantrarājaāikā, P. 4718, NK Vol. 63). Foremost among them were Yungton Dorjepel, the senior disciple of his early years, and Tanak Drolmawa Samdrub Dorje, the foremost disciple of his later years.

## YUNGTON DORJEPEL

Yungtonpa of the Len clan (1284-1365) was learned in dialectics, Abhidharma, and the mantra-traditions, ancient and new. He became the principal student of Karmapa III Rangjung Dorje. From Zur Jampa Senge, however, he obtained the mdo sgyu sems gsum, representative of the "distant lineage", and he composed the Illuminating Mirror (dPal gsang ba'i snying po'i rgyud don gsal byed me long, NK Vol. 70), a commentary on the Guhyagarbha which later came to surpass most other exegetical traditions in its popularity. His approach has been described as classificatory and he rearranged the fifth chapter, which became a focal point of study for later masters such as Zur Choying Rangdrol. Later

commentators such as Namka Rinchen, Lochen Dharmaśrī, Katok Getse Paṇḍita and Gyurme Pen-de Ozer were frequently influenced by his interpretations.

## TANAK DROLMAWA SAMDRUB DORJE

Samdrub Dorje from Tanak Nesar (1295-1376) studied extensively under Zur Jampa Senge. He became learned in the Magical Net and at Ugpalung he composed the Framework of the Guhyagarbha Tantra (Khog dbub, NK Vol. 70). He also received its empowerment from Len Nyatshalpa Sonam Gonpo. Among his students were Zurham śākya Jungne of Yangen, from whom issued the so-called "Zur lineage" (zur brgyud) and his own son, Sangye Rinchen, from whom issued the "son's lineage" (sras brgyud).

## ZURHAM ŚĀKYA JUNGNE

Zurham was the son of the aforementioned Zur Zangpopel, who commissioned woodblocks for the Collected Tantras of the Nyingmapa. In his fifth year he is reputed to have delivered an astonishing public exegesis of the Guhyagarbha. Under Sabzang Mati Paṇchen, Yungtonpa, and Jamyang Samdrub Dorje he made a general study of dialectics, sūtras, tantras and esoteric instructions, including the Sequence of the Path of the Magical Net (Māyājālapathakrama, P. 4736), the Guhyagarbha itself, and its sPar khab Commentary (Guhyagarbhamahātantrarājaāīkā, P. 4718, NK Vol. 63). He extensively propagated the mdo sgyu sems gsum traditions to his students, including Sangye Rinchen and Nyelpa Delegpa.

## SANGYE RINCHEN GYELTSSEN PELZANGPO

Sangye Rinchen (1350-1431), the son of Drolmawa Samdrub Dorje, mastered the doctrinal cycles of the Magical Net including the Guhyagarbha under his own father and Zurham śākya Jungne. At the age of fourteen, he was able to confer empowerment on others. He then composed a Great Commentary on the Guhyagarbha (gSang snying 'grel chen), and a Detailed Exposition of the Array of the Path of the Magical Net (Lam rnam bkod la rnam bzhag) when he was about forty. His other compositions include an Extensive Descriptive Basis for the Rites of the Wrathful Deities (Khro bo la mngon par rtogs pa rgyas pa) and a Detailed

Ceremony for the Rite of the Tie to the Higher Realms (gNas lung la 'ang cho ga rgyas pa).

In his seventieth year he accepted Go Lotsāwa Zhonupel, the author of the Blue Annals (Deb ther sngon po) as a disciple and granted him the empowerment of the peaceful and wrathful deities according to the Magical Net (sGyu 'phrul zhi khro'i dbang, NK Vol. 13); the longevity-empowerment of the Magical Net (sGyu 'phrul gyi tshe dbang, NK Vol. 13); an exegesis of the Guhyagarbha and its commentaries; and an extensive exegesis of the Array of the Path of the Magical Net (sGyu 'phrul rnam par bkod pa, P. 4737, NK Vol. 81) according to his own commentary. He also bestowed on him the transmissions of the Illuminating Lamp of the Fundamental Text (Khog gzhung gsal sgron, P. 4739, NK Vol. 80), the Forty-Chapter Tantra from the Magical Net (sGyu 'phrul bzhi bcu pa, Tingkye Vol.14), the Eighty-Chapter Tantra from the Magical Net (sGyu 'phrul brgyad bcu pa, T. 834) and the Tantra of the Supreme Spiritual Teacher from the Magical Net (sGyu 'phrul bla ma, T. 837).

## NAMKA RINCHEN

Namka Rinchen, an upholder of the mantra vows, was a student and lineage-holder of Tanak Drolmawa Samdrub Dorje. He is known to have composed one of the most extensive and detailed commentaries on the Guhyagarbha, which is still extant. The text, entitled Wish-fulfilling Gem: A Clarifying Lamp Commentary on the Tantra of the Secret Nucleus (gSang snying rgyud 'grel gsal byed sgron ma yid bzhin nor bu, NK Vols. 72-73), was written down at Jemasenge, a hermitage belonging to his teacher. There is some speculation that Namka Rinchen might be an alternative name for Sangye Rinchen Gyeltsen Pelzangpo, who, as stated above, is known to have composed an extensive commentary on the Guhyagarbha.

## GO LOTSĀWA ZHONPEL

Go Zhonupel (1392-1481) was a student of Karmapa V Dezhinshekpā, Ngog Jangchubpel, and the great paṇḍita Vanaratna. He corrected and retranslated the Litany of the Names of Mañjuśrī (Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti, T. 360), the Guhyagarbha Tantra, and other texts. He received the "distant

lineage" from Drolchen Sangye Rinchen, and so became a master and lineage-holder of the Nyingma school. He himself said:

"I acquired exceptional devotion towards the tradition renowned as the Nyingmapa school of secret mantra. So, I was never polluted by the defilement of rejecting [true] doctrine."

His main students were Karmapa VII, Chodrak Gyatso and Zhamarpa 1V Chokyi Drakpa (1453-1525), the latter being the principal lineage-holder, and teacher of Drigung Rinchen Phuntsok.

## DRIGUNG RINCHEN PHUNTSOK

Rinchen Phuntsok from Drigung Kunyergang mastered the transmitted precepts (bka' ma), exemplified by the mdo rgyud sems gsum; and the treasures (gter ma) associated with the Eight Transmitted Precepts (bKa' brgyad); the Four part Innermost Spirituality (sNying thig ya bzhi); and the Earlier and Later Treasure-troves (gTer kha gong 'og). It is said that, in accord with the tradition of the Ngari Pañchen Pema Wangyal, his custom was to disclose the central points by means of the transmitted precepts, and to adorn them with the esoteric instructions of the treasures. From him, the lineage descended through: Rangdrol Nyinda Sangye and Tshewang Norgye, a master of the Khon family, to Khonton Paljor Lhundrub (the former's son).

## KHONTON PALJOR LHUNDRUB

Paljor Lhundrub (1561-1637) studied the Guhyagarbha Tantra, its commentary composed by Yungtonpa (NK Vol. 70), and the other commentaries of the Magical Net cycle, such as Longchen Rabjampa's Dispelling the Darkness of the Ten Directions (Phyogs bcu mun sel, NK Vol. 68) under his father, and in consequence of his learning in this cycle, he was regarded as an emanation of Drophuḥpa. He instructed Orgyan Tendzin, the doctrine-master of Drakna and Zur Choying Rangdrol. The former composed a memorandum of the first five chapters of the Guhyagarbha according to Yungtonpa's Commentary. Late in life, Paljor Lhundrub instructed the Great Fifth Dalai Lama at his retreat in Phawangkha.

## ZUR CHOYING RANGDROL

Zur Choying Rangdrol (1604-1669) was the son of Zurchen Zhonu Dondrub and a direct descendant of the Zur lineage. From Paljor Lhundrub he received in particular two daily sessions of instruction which combined the Guhyagarbha Tantra, with its Indian *sPar khab Commentary* (Guhyagarbhamahātantrarājaāikā, P. 4718), and the Tibetan commentary by Yungtonpa (Bod 'grel gYung āik, NK Vol. 70). He composed a memorandum of the teaching he had received on the first five chapters. In 1622 he studied Longchen Rabjampa's commentary on the Guhyagarbha—Dispelling the Darkness of the Ten Directions (Phyogs bcu mun sel, NK Vol. 68). Then, in 1624, Choying Rangdrol expounded the Guhyagarbha to Dordrak Rigdzin III Ngagi Wangpo and others at the seminary of Tsethang, where he definitively established its exegesis, and, to Takla Padmamati of Katok, he taught the aforementioned commentary by Longchen Rabjampa. Padmamati, in turn, offered this exegetical transmission to Lhodrak Sungtrul Tsultrim Dorje (1598-1669), ensuring its future continuity. Late in life, Choying Rangdrol lived in Gungthang, where he instructed Sangdak Trinle Lhundrub in the Guhyagarbha.

## FIFTH DALAI LAMA

The Great Fifth Dalai Lama, Ngawang Lobzang Gyatso (1617-82), was born into the nobility of Chongye Taktse, and as the victor in Tibet's civil war, he became the first of the Dalai Lamas to hold combined spiritual and temporal authority, from 1641 onwards. Among his many actions in support of the Nyingma tradition, the Great Fifth acted as an important lineage-holder of the Guhyagarbha transmission. He received these teachings from Khonton Paljor Lhundrub, Zur Choying Rangdrol, and Khatsangpa, and he sponsored the xylographs for the Ganden Phuntsholing edition of both the Guhyagarbha Tantra and the commentary Dispelling the Darkness of the Ten Directions (Phyogs bcu mun sel, NK Vol. 68). This edition includes Tharpa Lotsāwa's colophon to the root tantra, along with an account of how the various lineages associated with it actually descended to the Fifth Dalai Lama (a.k.a. Zahor Bante) in person. He is known to have instructed Sangdak Trinle Lhundrub in accordance with the *sPar khab Commentary* (Guhyagarbhamahātantrarājaāikā, P. 4718, NK Vol. 63), and Yungtonpa's Commentary (gYung āik, NK Vol. 70).

Since then, the lineage of this Central Tibetan exegetical tradition of the Guhyagarbha Tantra has continued without interruption, owing to Sangdak Trinle Lhundrub's senior student Lochen Chogyal Tendzin and his two illustrious sons, Rigdzin Terdak Lingpa (1646-1714) and Lochen Dharmaśrī (1654-1717), from whom many ancillary lineages extended throughout Southern and Eastern Tibet.

## RIGDZIN TERDAK LINGPA

Rigdzin Terdak Lingpa (1646-1713) from Dargye Choling in Upper Dranang, was the son of Sangdak Trinle Lhundrub. His studies covered all extant transmissions of the Ancient Translation School, including the cycle of the Magical Net. In his thirteenth year, he memorised the Guhyagarbha Tantra and received its oral exegeses from his father. Later, he mastered the scriptures of the Nub tradition, the Zur tradition and of Rongzom Paṇḍita; Chomden Rigpei Raldri's Definitive Order of the Tantrapīṭaka (bCom ldan ral gri'i spyi rnam); and other texts. In particular, he is said to have obtained unimpeded powers of intellectual analysis by diligently investigating the scriptures of Longchen Rabjampa.

Terdak Lingpa restored the "distant lineage of transmitted precepts", exemplified by the mdo sgyu sems gsum, at Mindroling Monastery, which he himself founded in 1659 in the adjacent Drachi valley. It is due to his efforts and to those of his successors that the "distant lineage" continued as a living tradition through the turbulent events of the 17th and 18th centuries into modern times. As far as the Guhyagarbha Tantra is concerned, he composed influential means for attainment (sādhana) which are still extant: the Downpour of Pristine Cognition (sGrub thabs ye shes char 'bebs, NK Vol 13), the Granting of Supreme Immortality (sGrub thabs 'chi med mchog ster, NK Vol 13), the Means for Attainment Subsuming the Maṇḍala of the Herukas: A Downpour of Supreme Bliss (He ru ka'i dkyil 'khor bsdus pa'i sgrub thabs bde chen char 'bebs, NK Vol. 14), and the Maṇḍala Rite of the Wrathful Deities entitled Garland of Indestructible Reality (Khro bo'i dkyil chog rdo rje 'phreng ba, NK. Vol. 14).

He transmitted the Collected Tantras (rGyud 'bum) to the Fifth Dalai Lama and the regent of Tibet Sangye Gyatso, as well as to Rigdzin IV Pema Trinle

of Dorje Drak, Dzogchen Pema Rigdzin II Gyurme Thegchok Tendzin, Katok Gyel-se Sonam Detsen, and a multitude of other students from central and eastern Tibet. His closest students who maintained the familial line of transmission at Mindroling were his younger brother the venerable monk Lochen Dharmaśrī, his sons Pema Gyurme Gyatso, Zhabdrung Yidzhin Legdrub, Rinchen Namgyel; and his daughter, Jetsun Mingyur Paldron. Through their combined endeavours, the Mindroling lineage has continued down to the present in the following succession: Lochen Dharmaśrī (1654-1718), Trichen II Pema Gyurme Gyatso (1686-1717), Trichen III Rinchen Namgyel (1694-1760), Khenpo Orgyan Tendzin Dorje, Trichen V Trinle Namgyel, Trichen VI Pema Wangyal, Trichen VII Sangye Kunga, Dongak Tendzin Norbu, Gyurme Pen-de Ozer, and Dudjom Jigdrel Yeshe Dorje (1904-87), to Trichen XII Kunzang Wangyal (b. 1931).

### LOCHEN DHARMAŚRĪ

Among the lineage-holders of Mindroling, the most prolific in the composition of treatises was undoubtedly Lochen Dharmaśrī (1654-1718). He was fully ordained by the Fifth Dalai Lama, and given instruction by his elder brother, Terdak Lingpa, in the works of Longchenpa, Rongzompa, and those of the Zur lineage. From him too he received the entire transmission of the mdo sgyu sems gsum and their root—the Collected Tantras (rGyud 'bum). Subsequently, he taught the Guhyagarbha Tantra to some sixty students at Mindroling, and eight times he conferred the empowerment of the peaceful and wrathful deities of the Magical Net (NK Vol. 13).

In order to perpetuate both the distant lineage of transmitted precepts and the close lineage of treasures he composed the eighteen volumes of his Collected Works (bKa' 'bum), including commentaries on the Sūtra Which Gathers All Intentions (mDo dgongs pa 'dus pa) and the Magical Net. When, in particular, he heard his brother Terdak Lingpa deliver an oral exegesis of the Guhyagarbha which combined the sPar khab Commentary (Guhyagarbhamahātantrarājaāikā, P. 4718, NK Vol. 63) and Yungtonpa's Commentary (gYung āik, NK Vol. 70), he understood the overt and hidden meanings of that tantra and composed a voluminous series of texts, collectively known as the sGyu 'phrul skor gyi yig cha (NK Vols. 13-14, 74-76). Among them are two authoritative commentaries according to the

"distant lineage"— the Oral Transmission of the Lord of Secrets (dPal gsang ba'i snying po de kho na nyid nges pa'i rgyud kyi rgyal po sgyu 'phrul dra ba spyi don gyi sgo nas gtan la 'babs par 'byed pa'i legs bshad gsang bdag zhal lung, NK Vols. 74-75), which appraises the role of the Guhyagarbha Tantra within the Nyingma tradition as a whole, and the Ornament of the Intention of the Lord of Secrets (dPal gsang ba'i snying po de kho na nyid nges pa'i rgyud kyi 'grel pa gsang bdag dgongs rgyan, NK Vol. 76), which provides definitive readings for the root-verses themselves.

This article is the final part of a six part series which brings you Gyurme Dorje's extensive and remarkable introduction to the Guhyagarbha Tantra, the flagship tantra of the Nyingma School of the Tibetan Buddhism.

### ORGYAN CHODRAK

The compositions of Lochen Dharmaśrī set in motion a new phase of commentarial writings on the Guhyagarbha Tantra, initially at Mindroling and later in Kham. Among his immediate students, the venerable Orgyan Chodrak (b. 1676) composed three short treatises which are still extant. These include his Introductory Tract on the Ornament of the Intention of the Lord of Secrets in form of a Memorandum on the Earlier Chapters, entitled Precious Garland of my Teacher's Esoteric Instructions (dPal gsang bdag dgongs rgyan gyi spyi don yan gyi bshad pa'i zin bris bla ma'i man ngag rin chen 'phreng ba, NK Vol. 76), which was composed in 1730, along with a synopsis (bsdus don) and chapter analysis (sa bcad). Other works authored by him include the Resolution of Doubts Concerning Difficult Points in the Guhyagarbha (gSang snying dka' gnas dogs gcod lung rigs rdo rje'i rol rtsed, NK. Vol. 78), and another introductory tract (gSang snying spyi don gtan la 'bebs pa'i thal gyur rig pa'i sgo byed, NK Vol. 78).

### PEMA GYURME GYATSO AND PEMA WANGYAL

Among the lineage holders of Terdak Lingpa who maintained the family line of transmission at Mindroling, Trichen II Pema Gyurme Gyatso (1686-1717) composed important empowerment rituals for the Guhyagarbha—the *dBang gi cho ga dkyil 'khor rgya mtshor 'jug pa* (NK, Vol. 13) in respect of the maṇḍala of the peaceful deities, and the corresponding *dBang chog khrag 'thung rdo rje'i gad rgyangs* (NK. Vol. 14) in respect of the wrathful deities. He also authored an introductory tract on the Guhyagarbha entitled *gSang*

*snying spyi don mthing ba don rtogs* (NK. Vol. 77). Then, in the late 18th century, his descendent Trichen VI Pema Wangyal composed the *Ritual Sequence: Procedures for Explaining the Tantra* (rGyud kyi 'chad thabs cho ga'i rim pa, NK Vol. 13). Later holders of the Mindroling lineage who were not members of the Nyo family included Gyurme Pen-de Odzer (aka. Jampal Dewei Nyima), who, around 1924, composed a commentary on the Guhyagarbha entitled *Key Which Opens the Hundred Doors of Profound Meaning* (Zab don sgo brgya 'byed pa'i lde'u mig, NK 79).

#### RIGDZIN JIGME LINGPA

Rigdzin Jigme Lingpa (1730-1798) whose important role in cataloguing and dissmmentating the Collected Tantras we have already noted, also composed means for attainments in relation to the Guhyagarbha Tantra—the sGyu 'phrul zhi ba'i sgrub thabs rnam grol zhing rta (NK Vol. 17), in respect of the peaceful deities, and the sGrub thabs khrag 'thung mngon rdzogs (NK. Vol., 17) in respect of the wrathful deities. After him, the focal point of Nyingma activity in Tibet shifted markedly to the east, where the Kham traditions of the Zur lineage had also been maintained independently since the 12th and 13th centuries.

#### 14. THE KHAM TRADITIONS

The earliest transmission of the Guhyagarbha Tantra in East Tibet appears to have occurred during the great translator Vairocana's period of exile from the Tibetan heartlands in the late 8th century. There, he translated Sūryaprabhāsiṃha's Extensive Commentary on the Secret Nucleus (śrīguhyagarbhatattvaviniścayavyākhyānāīkā, P. 4719, NK Vol. 64) at the Jamchen temple of Odu, and gave instructions upon it. However it was not until the 12th century that Katokpa Dampa Deshek definitively established Zur Drophukpa's legacy in Kham.

#### KATOKPA DAMPA DESHEK

Katokpa Dampa Deshek, also known as Sherab Senge (1122-1192), was a maternal cousin of Phakmodrupa and a native of Puburgang near Lithang, in Kham. He studied the Guhyagarbha Tantra, and other mainstream transmissions of the Nyingma teachings under Dzamton Drowei Gonpo, a student of Zur Drophukpa, and according to the Great Fifth Dalai Lama's Record of Teachings Received (lNga pa chen po'i gsan yig) he actually met met Drophukpa in person. The teachings which he received directly from

Drophukpa, which were not contained in the aforementioned transmitted precepts of Chimphu, are known as the Aural lineage of Drophukpa (sGros snyan brgyud, NK. Vols. 65-66). He also authored a Trilogy on the Peaceful and Wrathful Deities of the Magical Net combined with Vajrakīla (sGyu 'phrul zhi khro phur gsum, NK Vol. 15), and a Synopsis of Vilāsavajra's Clarification of the Commitments entitled Clear Mirror (Dam tshig gsal bkra'i bsdud don gsal byed me long, NK. Vol. 89). In 1159, Dampa Deshek returned to Kham and founded the monastery of Dorjeden at Katok, a hilltop ridge that appeared to be shaped like the Tibetan letter KA. There, to students from Amdo, Tshawarong, Mustang, and Mon, he expounded the Great Perfection and the Guhyagarbha, including its major and minor Indian and Tibetan commentaries and texts, in accordance with the Zur tradition. In this way, he laid the foundation for the teaching of the secret mantras in the east.

The lineage which he founded at Katok was maintained by his students in the following succession: Tsangtonpa Dorje Gyeltsan (1137-1226), Jampabum (b. 1179), Chenga Mangpuwa Sonam Bumpa (1222-1281), Uwo Yeshe Bum (1242-1327), Jangchub Bumpa (1284-1347), Sonam Zangpo (1295-1357), Kunga Bumpa (1332-1381), Wangchuk Pelwa (1332-1384), Lodro Bumpa (1342-1406), Lodro Senge (1371-1431), Jangchub Lodro, Jangchub Senge (1377-1439), and Jangchub Gyeltsan, from whom the transmission descended to Khedrub Yeshe Gyeltsan (b. 1395). Among them, Tsangtonpa also composed a Commentary on Vilāsavajra's Clarification of the Commitments entitled Lamp for the Eye of Yoga (Dam tshig gsal bkra'i 'grel pa rnal 'byor mig gi sgron ma, NK. Vol. 89).

#### KHEDRUB YESHE GYELTSAN

The last mentioned, Khedrub Yeshe Gyeltsan (b. 1395) from Puburgang, revitalised the exegetical transmission of the Guhyagarbha Tantra and its commentaries in Kham. His voluminous compositions included a Commentary on the Sequence of the Path of Meditation according to the Peaceful and Wrathful Deities entitled Clarifying Lamp (Zhi khro'i bsgom khog lam rim gsal sgron, NK. Vol. 16), a Commentary, Outline and Synopsis of the Secret Nucleus (gSang ba'i snying po la 'grel pa / sa bcad / bsdud don), a Commentary and Annotations on the Sequence of the Path of the Magical Net entitled Pearl Garland (sGyu 'phrul lam rim gyi 'grel pa mu tig phreng ba, NK Vol. 84), a Commentary on the Clarification of

Commitments entitled the Clear Mirror (Dam tshig gsal bkra la 'grel pa gsal ba'i me long, NK Vol. 89), the Text on the Means for Assuming the Mudrās of the Peaceful and Wrathful Deities (Zhi khro'i phyag rgya bcings thabs kyi yi ge), the Commentary on Katokpa Dampa Deshek's General Exposition of the Vehicles (Dam pa rin po che'i theg pa spyi bcing gi 'grel pa, NK Vol. 58); and the Detailed Exposition of the Feast-offering Ceremony (Tshogs kyi 'khor lo'i rnam bshad).

### His Successors

Among Khedrub Yeshe Gyeltsan's students, Namka Gyeltsan from Pelbar, the first in the line of abbatial assistants (drung rabs) at Katok, also composed commentaries on the Guhyagarbha and on Buddhaguhya's *Innermost Point of the Magical Net* (Man ngag sgyu 'phrul thugs tig 'grel bshad rin chen sgron ma, NK Vol. 87). Foremost of his students, in turn, was Khedrub Namka Pelwa from Drodok in Puburgang, who composed a commentary on the Guhyagarbha Tantra, entitled *gSang snying ti ka dngul dkar me long*, which was highly regarded in Kham, alongside those of Rongzompa, Longchenpa and Yungtonpa. Also of note are his still extant *Commentary on the Sequence of the Path of the Magical Net* entitled *Precious Clear Water* (sGyu 'phrul man ngag lam rim 'grel bshad rin po che'i chu dvangs, NK Vol. 85), and his Annotations on the sPar khab Commentary entitled *Solar Rays* (sPar khab kyi mchan 'grel nyi ma'i 'od zer, NK Vol. 63).

Around the same time, Horpo Shakya Dorje, the first in the later line of illustrious monastic preceptors (mkhan rabs) at Katok, following Khedrub Yeshe Gyeltsan, composed his *Clear Mirror Elucidating Difficulties in the Array of the Path of the Magical Net* (sGyu 'phrul lam rnam bkod kyi 'bru dka'i don dkrol gsal byed me long, NK Vol. 86) and its synopsis (sGyu 'phrul gces bsdud man ngag lam rim don 'byed, NK. Vol. 86).

In this way, a distinct lineage of the "distant lineage" of the mdo sgyu sems gsum, including the Guhyagarbha Tantra, was propagated in Kham from the 13th to the 16th, centuries, during that period between the flourishing of Ugpalung and the rise of the modern Nyingma monasteries, such as Mindroling and Dorje Drak.

Following the unification of Tibet under the rule of the Fifth Dalai Lama at the conclusion of the civil war in 1641, Nyingmapa monasteries benefitted substantially on account of the new ruler's personal and family affiliations,

both in central and eastern Tibet. This was the period when Mindroling, Pelyul and Dzogchen were all founded, and during which Katok was revitalised.

### **Expansion of Katok**

The rebuilding at Katok was initiated through the efforts of the great treasure finders Rigdzin Dudul Dorje (1615-1672) and Longsel Nyingpo (1625-1692). The latter's closest son, Sonam Detsen (1675-1724), who is also revered as the incarnation of both Tsangtonpa and Rigdzin Dudul Dorje, received the Central Tibetan lineage of the Nyingma teachings from Terdak Lingpa at Mindroling, and so he revitalised the exegetical traditions at Katok. Since then his five successive incarnations, beginning with Dri-me Zhingkyong Gonpo Pel Chokyi Dorje (b. 1724) have continued to hold the seniormost position in the spiritual hierarchy of Katok.

Over the centuries that followed, Katok and its many branches have produced outstanding learned and accomplished masters who penned their own commentaries on the traditional corpus of texts. Earliest among them were the learned peripatetic scholar Rigdzin Tshewang Norbu (1698-1755) and Getse Paṇḍita Gyurme Tshewang Chodrub (b. 1761). The latter was renowned throughout Eastern Tibet for his learning and eclecticism. He received teachings from Rigdzin Jigme Lingpa in Lhokha and was subsequently commissioned to edit the Derge xylographic edition of the Collected Tantras of the Nyingmapa. In 1797, as this monumental task neared completion, he composed his celebrated catalogue to the collection, entitled *Discourse Resembling A Divine Drum* (bDe bar gshegs pa'i sde snod rdo rje theg pa snga 'gyur rgyud 'bum rin po che'i rtogs pa brjod pa lha'i rnga bo che lta bu'i gtam). Among his other works is the *Ornament of the Enlightened Intention of the Second Buddha; an Extensive Commentary on the Sequence of the Path of the Inner Secret Mantras* (gSangs sngags nang gi lam rim rgya cher 'grel pa sangs rgyas gnyis pa'i dgongs rgyan, NMKMG. Vol. 35), and the *Introductory Tract on the Guhyagarbha Tantra entitled Ocean of Eloquence* (gSang snying spyi don legs bshad rol mtsho, NK Vol. 77). One of his successors, the third Getse Paṇḍita incarnation Gyurme Tenpa Namgyel (b. 1886), also composed a *Memorandum on the Axioms of the Guhyagarbha Tantra* (gSang snying gtan tshigs kyi zin bris, NK Vol. 78).

During the 20th century the exegesis of the Guhyagarbha Tantra was further developed at Katok by a series of illustrious monastic preceptors who are still within living memory: Katok Situ Chokyi Gyatso (1880-1925), Rigdzin Ngawang Pelzang (1878-1941), Khenpo Jorden (1888-1951), Khenpo Nuden (b. 1907), and the contemporary lineage holder Chadrel Sangye Dorje. Among them, Katok Situ Chokyi Gyatso composed the *Supplement on the Ritual Service of the Maṇḍala of the Wrathful Deities of the Magical Net, entitled Feast of the Awareness Holders* (sGyu 'phrul khro bo'i dkyil 'khor du bsnyen pa'i tshul gyi lhan thabs rig 'dzin dga' ston, NK Vol. 17) and the Resolution of Doubts Concerning the Difficulties in Rongzompa's Chapter on the Attainment of the Meditational Deities entitled *Beautiful Pearl Garland of Scriptural Authority and Reasoning* (sGyu 'phrul dka' gnas snang ba lhar sgrub pa dogs gcod lung rigs mu tig phreng mdzes, NK Vol. 78). Rigdzin Ngawang Pelzang composed a Means for Attainment of the Magical Net entitled Harvest of Blessings (sGyu 'phrul sgrub thabs byin rlabs kyi snye ma, NK Vol. 17).

From the time of the monastery's foundation in 1159 until the incumbency of Katok Situ Chokyi Gyatso there were ninety successive spiritual hierarchs presiding over Katok. Following the restoration of Katok in recent decades, the late Khenpo Jamyang in 1999 published the most extensive updated edition of the commentarial teachings of the "distant lineage" (bka' ma) in 120 volumes.

## PELYUL

Rigdzin Kunzang Sherab (1636-98) founded the monastery of Namgyel Jangchubling at Pelyul in the Ngu-chu valley in 1665. He and his successors upheld the teaching tradition and treasure-cycles of Ratna Lingpa (1403-79) and Namcho Mingyur Dorje (1645-1667). Later, in the nineteenth century, Gyatrul Pema Dongak Tendzin (1830-1892) was encouraged by Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo and Chokgyur Dechen Lingpa to institute the annual sgrub chen ceremony associated with the twenty-seven extant maṇḍalas of the "distant lineage", and he founded the branch-monastery of Dartang Dongak Shedrubling in Golok, which is the largest monastery representing the tradition of Pelyul. It was there that the extant texts constituting the "distant lineage of transmitted precepts" were republished in some twenty volumes by Orgyan Dongak Chokyi Nyima (1854-1906). The collection was subsequently reprinted twice in India by Dudjom Jigdrel Yeshe Dorje (b.

1904), but in length it has now been superseded by the abovementioned 120 volume Katok edition, compiled by Khenpo Jamyang.

## DZOGCHEN

Drubwang Padma Rigdzin (1625-1697) travelled to Kham at the behest of the Fifth Dalai Lama, and founded the monastery of Dzogchen Samten Choling at Rudam Kyitram in 1685. The seat was initially maintained by his three senior students, Terchen Nyima Drakpa (1647-1710), the renowned compiler of an authoritative edition of the Tibetan Book of the Dead, Ponlob Namka Osel (c. 1650-1726), and Zhechen Rabjam Tenpei Gyaltzen (1650-1704). Later the monastery was expanded by his successive incarnations: Dzogchen Drubwang II Gyurme Thekchok Tendzin (1699-1757), Dzogchen Drubwang III Ngedon Tendzin Zangpo (1759-1792), Dzogchen Drubwang IV Mingyur Namkei Dorje (1793-1870), Dzogchen Drubwang V Thubten Chokyi Dorje (1872-1935), and Dzogchen Drubwang VI Orgyan Jigdrel Jangchub Dorje (c. 1935-1959).

From the monastery's foundation down to the present there have been twelve successive spiritual hierarchs at Dzogchen, including those incarnations. In particular, during the lifetime of the fourth incarnation, the śrīśiṃha College was founded at Dzogchen by Gyel-se Zhenphen Tha-ye (b. 1800), also known as Kuzhab Gemang. At the request of Trichen Sangye Kunga of Mindroling and Patrul Pema Wangyal, he established a compendium of the "distant lineage of transmitted precepts", including the cycle of the Magical Net, in about ten volumes. He also composed an outline of the chapters of the Guhyagarbha Tantra, entitled *gSang snying khog dbub sa bcad 'khor 'das bar gyi lo tsa* (NK Vol, 78). His incarnate line is known as that of the Kuzhab Gemang, and among them, his immediate successor, Gyakong Khenpo Zhenpen Chokyi Nangwa (1871-1927), also known as Khenpo Zhenga, also wrote commentaries on thirteen major texts, including the Guhyagarbha Tantra. His *Annotated Commentary on the Tantra of the Magical Net entitled Nucleus of Sun and Moon* (sGyu 'phrul drva ba'i rgyud kyi mchan 'grel nyi zla snying po, NK Vol. 78) is very much a repetition of the interlinear sections of Longchen Rabjampa's *Dispelling the Darkness of the Ten Directions* (Phyogs bcu mun sel).

During the same period, Khenpo Pema Dorje (fl. 1830-1884) expanded the curriculum at śrīśiṃha College, and authored his own ritual practices on

the cycle of the Magical Net. These include two means for attainment: the Las byang nyung ngur dril ba (NK Vol. 13) and the Khro bo'i sgrub thabs snying po'i don bsdu (NK Vol. 14), and two burnt offering rites in respect of the Peaceful and Wrathful Deities entitled Zhi ba'i sbyin sreg bsnyen po'i kha skong zla ba'i 'od zer (NK Vol. 13) and Khro bo'i dkyil 'khor la brten pa'i zhi ba sbyin sreg bsnyen po'i kha skong zla ba'i 'od zer (NK Vol. 14).

#### Later developments

The last of the great six Nyingma monasteries, Zhechen Tenyi Dargyeling, was founded in 1735 by Zhechen II Gyurme Kunzang Namgyel (1713-1769). The complex was developed and expanded by the succession of Rabjam Rinpoches and by great scholars of the calibre of Gyurme Thutob Namgyel (b. 1787) and Zhechen Gyeltsab Gyurme Pema Namgyel (1871-1926). Among them, Gyurme Thutob Namgyel empowered Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo (1820-1892) in the peaceful and wrathful deities of the Magical Net. The latter was directly responsible, along with Jamgon Kongtrul and Chogyur Dechen Lingpa, for the resurgence of Buddhism in nineteenth century Kham. In his youth, he had studied all the existing exegetical traditions of the sūtras, treatises and tantras including the Guhyagarbha Tantra over thirteen years, and received all the transmissions of the Kangyur, the Collected Tantras of the Nyingmapa, and the Tengyur.

Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo had countless students who upheld the diverse lineages and schools of Tibetan Buddhism. Among them some of the foremost were Ju Mipham Namgyel (1846-1912), Katok Situ Chokyi Gyatso (1880-1925), Adzom Drukpa (1842-1924), Dodrub III Jigme Tenpei Nyima (1865-1926), Tertön Sogyal (1856-1926), and Dzogchen Drubwang V Thubten Chokyi Dorje (1872-1935).

Ju Mipham Namgyel (1846-1912), a native of Junyung in Sershul county, received instruction in this tradition from both Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo and Paltrul Rinpoche (1808-1887). Renowned for his analyses of Buddhist sūtra and tantra-based philosophy, his writings include an important summary of Longchen Rabjampa's *Dispelling the Darkness of the Ten Directions* (Phyogs bcu mun sel), entitled Nucleus of Inner Radiance (sPyi don 'od gsal snying po, NK Vol. 69), which examines the Guhyagarbha in terms of the ten aspects of mantra. A synopsis of this text is given above, pp. 00-00.

Dodrub III Jigme Tenpei Nyima (1865-1926), son of the great treasure-finder Dudjom Lingpa and upholder of Rigdzin Jigme Lingpa's lineage, also studied under Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo and he composed a commentary on the Guhyagarbha Tantra, entitled *Key to the Precious Treasury which Concisely Ascertains the Glorious Tantra of the Secret Nucleus* (dPal gsang ba'i snying po'i rgyud kyi spyi don nyung ngu'i ngag gis rnam par 'byed pa rin chen mdzod kyi lde mig, NK Vol. 77). This text, which includes an elaborate discussion on the meditative techniques, was written down by Tertön Sogyal at Dodrubchen's dictation. In the Guhyagarbha Temple at Dodrubchen Gonpa in Golok, the exegetical tradition of the Guhyagarbha Tantra was regularly taught during winter seminars. The same lineage was also established at Mewa Monastery near Khakok by his student Do Rinpoche Khamsum Zilnon Kyepei Dorje (b. 1890). It was here that Khenpo Sonam Chodrel composed a *Synopsis on Difficulties in the Guhyagarbha* entitled *Oral Transmission of the Spiritual Teacher* (gSang snying dka' gnas bsdud don bla ma'i zhal lung, NK Vol. 78).

## 15. THE TREASURE CYCLES ASSOCIATED WITH THE GUHYAGARBHA TANTRA

In addition to these holders of the "distant lineage of transmitted precepts" (ring brgyud bka' ma), who disseminated and composed commentaries on the Guhyagarbha in central and eastern Tibet, we must also take note of the various gter ma traditions inspired by the original tantra-text.

Canonical support for the practice of concealing and rediscovering texts in the form of treasure doctrines (gter ma) is found in many sūtras and tantras. The rationale is that, whereas the vitality of the distant lineage is inevitably weakened by the vicissitudes of time, the purity of the ancient translations is said to be retained in the "close lineage of treasures" (nye brgyud gter ma), a series of teachings which are revealed or discovered anew in each generation and which have a more immediate impact. Such teachings are classified as earth-treasures (sa gter), treasures of enlightened intention recalled through the direct communication of buddha-mind (dgongs gter), pure visions (dag snang), recollected treasures (rjes dran gyi gter), or rediscovered treasures (yang gter). Among these, the earth treasures are primarily associated with Padmasambhava who transmitted voluminous teachings on Mahāyoga, Anuyoga and Atiyoga to his consort

Yeshe Tsogyal. She is said to have retained these, rearranging them on five kinds of yellow scroll (symbolising the five buddha-families) in the symbolic script of the *ḍākinīs*, and to have inserted them in various sealed treasure-chests, to be rediscovered in future generations. Padmasambhava, King Trisong Detsen, Yeshe Tsogyal, as well as Vimalamitra, Vairocana, Nub Sangye Yeshe, Namkei Nyingpo, Nyak Jñānakumāra, Nanam Dorje Dudjom, Nyangben Tingdzin Zangpo and others are similarly regarded as concealers of *gter ma*, while the future rediscoverers are their emanations.

Treasures revealed through enlightened intention and pure vision are somewhat different. The rationale here is that, owing to past aspirations, bodhisattvas continually hear the sound of the doctrine in the elements and in the sounds of wild beasts. Buddhas and bodhisattvas may reveal themselves in visions and teach the doctrine. So it is said in the *Āryasarvapuṇya-samuccayasamādhisūtra* (T. 134):

O Vimalatejas! the great bodhisattvas who are desirous of the teachings and who are endowed with perfect aspiration and reverence, will behold the visage of the Transcendent Lord Buddha and hear his doctrine even though they reside in another region of the universe.

This *gter ma* literature also developed a structural tendency, corresponding to the *mdo sgyu sems gsum* of the "distant lineage": In general the major discoveries should include texts concerning Guru Padmasambhava, Great Perfection and *Mahākaruṇika* (*bla rdzogs thugs gsum*), and the foremost of these should also contain texts concerning the Eight Transmitted Precepts, the Gathering of Intentions, and *Vajrakīla* (*bka' dgongs phur gsum*).

Among the treasure-finders (*gter ston*) there are some whose discoveries include texts associated with the *maṇḍala* of the hundred peaceful and wrathful deities, which is that of the *Guhyaagarbha* and the cycle of the Magical Net. The most notable of these will be mentioned now, on the basis of their biographies recorded in Jamgon Kongtrul's nineteenth century compilation, the *Lives of the Hundred Treasure-finders*; a *Beauteous Rosary of Precious Beryl* (*gTer ston brgya rtsa'i rnam thar rin chen bai ḍūrya'i phreng mdzes*).

YARJE ORGYAN LINGPA

Orgyan Lingpa (1323-c.1360), having obtained various prophesies and signs, proceeded to the Pema Tsekpa Rock behind Yarlung Sheldrak, where in a cave once frequented by Padmasambhava, there were natural stone images of the peaceful and wrathful deities, guarded by an image of Rāhula. From the heads and other body-parts of that image of Rāhula, Orgyan Lingpa extracted several cycles of texts, and specifically from the throat he discovered the Gathering of the Transmitted Precepts of the Peaceful and Wrathful Deities (Zhi khro bka' 'dus).

#### KARMA LINGPA

Karma Lingpa (c. 1327-1387) extracted from Mount Gampodar in Dakpo the Peaceful and Wrathful Deities: Natural Liberation through Enlightened Intention (Zhi khro dgongs pa rang grol, RTD. Vol. 4, pp. 1-281), the Great Compassionate One; the Peaceful and Wrathful Lotus Deities (Thugs rje chen po padma zhi khro), and other treasures. He gave the last mentioned to fourteen students, but conferred the Peaceful and Wrathful Deities: Natural Liberation through Enlightened Intention (Zhi khro dgongs pa rang grol) on his son Nyida Choje alone; demanding that for three generations it should be transmitted to only a single person. Then, it was disseminated widely by Gyarawa Namka Chokyi Gyatso, the third generation successor, from which time the lineage of its empowerment, transmission and guidance has continued unbroken. One section of this text, the Great Liberation by Hearing during the Intermediate State (Bar do thos grol chen po), is known in its English translations as the Tibetan Book of the Dead.

#### SHERAB OZER

The treasurer-finder Sherab Ozer (b. 1518) whose main residence was at Pelri Monastery in Chongye, discovered the Point of Liberation; Peaceful and Wrathful Deities (Grol tig zhi khro, RTD. vols. 4, 11), the practice of which was maintained in the Chongye area through to the era of Rigdzin Jigme Lingpa (1730-1798), who was born in that locale.

#### JATSON NYINGPO

Rigdzin Jatson Nyungpo (1585-1656) discovered many treasures, especially in the Kongpo region, including the Peaceful and Wrathful Deities: Nucleus of Definitive Meaning (Zhi khro nges don snying po, JTPD. Vol. 4).

### DUDUL DORJE

Rigdzin Dudul Dorje (1615-72) whose name has already been mentioned in connection with the revitalising of Katok Monastery, obtained the treasure-cycles of the Peaceful and Wrathful Deities of the Magical Net and of the Eight Transmitted Precepts along with the protectors of these transmitted precepts (sGyu 'phrul zhi khro dang bka brgyad skor bka' srung bcas), which had been extracted from Mount Namchak Barwa in Puwo by the yogin Duntrengchen.

### NAMCHO MIGYUR DORJE

The prodigious and youthful treasure-finder Namcho Mingyur Dorje (1645-1667), in his remarkably short life discovered twenty-three volumes of treasure-doctrines, including the gNam chos zhi khro (RTD. Vol. 64).

### CHOGYUR DECHEN LINGPA

Chogyur Dechen Lingpa (1829-1870) received from Jamgon Kongtrul most of the Nyingma teachings that were prevalent in Kham, including the Peaceful and Wrathful Deities of the Magical Net (sGyu 'phrul zhi khro). He and Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo were both endowed with seven successions, which concerned the "distant lineage" of the mdo sgyu sems gsum, the treasures, and pure visions. Among his profound treasures (zab gter), there are some such as the Great Compassionate One: the Magical Net of the Lotus (Thugs rje chen po padma sgyu 'phrul drva ba), discovered from Khandro Bumdzong, and the Magical Net according to the Seven Profound Cycles (Zab bdun sgyu 'phrul), which uphold the terminology and philosophical structures of the "distant lineage".

### JAMYANG KHYENTSE WANGPO

Jamyang Khyenste Wangpo (1820-92) whose role in the dissemination of all traditions throughout Eastern Tibet in the 19th century, has already been mentioned, was also a prolific discoverer of the treasures. These texts include the Cycle of the Magical Net of the Three Roots (rTsa gsum sgyu 'phrul drva ba'i skor (RTD. Vol. 7) which he extracted from Singu Yutso, above the hermitage of Rongme Karmo Taktsang. Also, in a pure vision, while residing at Dzongsho Deshek Dupa, he visited the Stūpa of śaṭkarakūāa where he was empowered and instructed by Padmasambhava's eight emanations into the Eight Transmitted Precepts of

Great Attainment (sGrub chen bka' brgyad) and the Peaceful and Wrathful Deities of the Magical Net (sGyu 'phrul zhi khro).

#### 16. MAHĀYOGA AND ATIYOGA INTERPRETATIONS OF THE GUHYAGARBHA:

Indigenous Tibetan commentaries on the Guhyagarbha Tantra and its related literature are contained in the Collected Transmitted Precepts of the Nyingmapa (NK Vols. 13-17, 60-89). These texts broadly fall into two categories— those which interpret the root-verses of the Guhyagarbha Tantra in the context of the "distant lineage of transmitted precepts", according to which this tantra is representative of Mahāyoga, and those which interpret it in terms of the resultant vehicle, Atiyoga, the Great Perfection. As Ju Mipham Namgyel says in his Summary Entitled Nucleus of Inner Radiance (sPyi don 'od gsal snying po, NK Vol. 69):

The exegetical techniques through which this tantra has been studied comprise two great traditional paths, namely the exegetical method which is extensive and common, and the expository method which is profound and uncommon. The former refers to the wondrous tradition of the transmitted precepts of the glorious Zur family who were kings among all the holders of gnostic mantras, and is explained in accordance with Mahāyoga's own textual tradition. The second refers to the unsurpassed tradition of the two lions of speech— Rongzom Paṇḍita Chokyi Zangpo and Longchen Rabjampa. Because this tantra is classified as the Ati (highest) subdivision of Mahāyoga, it is essentially identical to the Mahā subdivision of Atiyoga, among the three classes of the Great Perfection. For in the secret Great Perfection there are three categories of teaching, namely: that which reveals the maṇḍala in which the generation and perfection stages [of meditation] are indivisible, and mind and pristine cognition naturally manifest; that which reveals the true nature of mind to be the natural expression of primordial buddhahood, without regard for the generation or perfection stages; and that which reveals pristine cognition in its essence, manifesting naturally as buddhahood. Among them, this exposition accords with the first.

And he continues:

While these two exegetical methods are of a single savour in that their intentions are directed towards the conclusive essential meaning, in the context of this work, the exegesis accords with the latter tradition, possessing the essentials of profound esoteric instruction.

These two exegetical traditions do not therefore uphold contradictory dogmas but they do indicate a subtle difference of emphasis.

In the words of Lochen Dharmaśrī:

Mahāyoga realises all things to be the miracle of mind's true nature (sems nyid) in which appearance and emptiness are indivisible, Anuyoga realises all things to be the expressive power of mind's true nature, in which the expanse [of reality] and pristine cognition are indivisible; and Atiyoga realises all things to be manifest naturally as mind's true nature, the naturally present pristine cognition, which is present atemporally, without creation or cessation.

And Zurchungpa Sherab Drak:

Mahāyoga appears as the miracle of awareness. Anuyoga appears as the expressive power of intrinsic awareness. Atiyoga is awareness, naturally manifest.

There is no doubt that the basic techniques of Mahāyoga, stressing the nature of the ground and the gradual visualisations of the generation stage, are present in the Guhyagarbha Tantra, but the text equally demonstrates the integration of both the generation and perfection stages of meditation and the self-manifesting nature of mind and pristine cognition, which are associated with Atiyoga. Indeed, the text comprises the generation and perfection stages, as well as the seeds of Great Perfection, indicating that there is no fundamental contradiction between these exegetical approaches.

The first method is exemplified by those treatises derived from the "distant lineage", including the Indian commentaries by Vilāsavajra, and Buddhaguhya, as well as the Tibetan commentaries by Yungton Dorjepel, Tanak Drolmawa Samdrub Dorje, Namka Rinchen, Menlungpa Mikyo Dorje, Lochen Dharmaśrī, Pema Gyurme Gyatso, Katok Getse Gyurme

Tsewang Chodrub, Dodrub III Jigme Tenpei Nyima, and Gyurme Pen-de Ozer. The second is exemplified by the commentaries of Sūryaprabhāsiṃha, Padmasambhava, Rongzompa, Longchen Rabjampa, Ju Mipham Namgyel and Zhenpen Chokyi Nangwa. The treatises composed by all these authors on the Guhyagarbha have already been noted.

In the course of the textual annotations, the reader's attention will be drawn to specific points which differentiate these two approaches, the first tending towards reductionism and classification with emphasis on the structural basis of Mahāyoga, the second elaborating the essential, often covert meanings. While the edition and translation of the Guhyagarbha Tantra contained in this volume largely follows the interpretation of Longchen Rabjampa's commentary *Dispelling the Darkness of the Ten Directions* (Phyogs bcu mun sel), the variant readings of the extant manuscript and xylograph editions raise further difficulties, which I have sought to resolve by consulting the vajrapāda established by Lochen Dharmaśrī in his definitive *Ornament of the Intention of the Lord of Secrets* (gSang bdag dgongs rgyan).